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INSIDE

OCTOBER '10
ISSUE 190 • £3.95

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A GO-GO!**

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SLAVE TO THE NEEDLE



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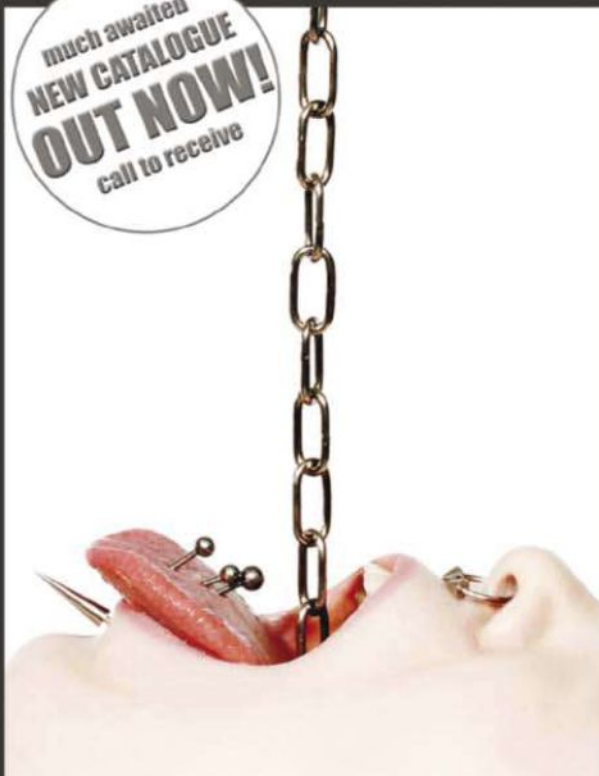
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THE NEEDLE HAS LANDED

A couple of months ago, I found a complete box set of all five movies in the original Planet of the Apes sequence. It wasn't exactly a top priority purchase, but how could I say no when it was only £1? (Charity shop special – I don't loiter in them very often but this was a good find). I eventually got around to watching them at a rate of about one a week and this happened to coincide with taking over the recently vacated Editor's position here at Skin Deep.

Bear with me – it's sort of relevant...

Inevitably, with any switch of scenery at a magazine, changes will take place. Hopefully for the better – as they say at Burger King, "if you like what we do, tell your friends, if you don't, tell us." I think it comes from Burger King anyway. It's a better thing to say than "would you like fries with that?" Over at Big Tattoo Planet, we've been keeping track of all the suggestions made regarding the magazine and there are some good, solid ideas in there. As much as I would like to, these changes won't take place all at once – and if you haven't voiced your opinion yet, maybe you should.

For me and those who work alongside me, our job is simply to catalogue all of this issue by issue and present it as best we can. Intelligently, entertainingly and make it look damn good – the same as any job whether your

sumame is Beckham or you work for the electricity board.

Over the next few issues, we'll be introducing some new feature ideas, looking deeper still into the heart of tattooing, inviting comments and opinions from both readers and artists alike. We'll also be scouring the globe in search of artists who are taking the art into the future, draining the heads of artists working every corner of the UK and Europe – it would be nice to say 'the world', but that's a little ambitious. At least for this year.

Personally speaking, each issue I'll be pushing hard to get more art into these pages, more artists involved and evoke a true world view of where we are and where we're going. Possible? Yeah of course it is – I'm sure you'll let me know if I veer off course. You guys are like that.

So, back to the Planet of the Apes thing. It's a good movie. Far superior to the remake. While the remake may be slick and the Apes really do look like Apes, that's all it was – slick. It didn't have a heart, didn't have a soul and the critics of world let everybody know about it. Conversely, the original had Apes that sort of looked like Apes, but it had a lot of heart and even more soul. Those guys were out to tell a story and they weren't about to let anything get in their way. From the success of that movie, they got more and more funding to make more of the same – the more money they had, the more they poured into the



COVER MODEL
HOLLIE BRYANT
PHOTOGRAPHER
JAY McLAUGHLIN
TATTOOS
VARIOUS

sets and effects and the story kind of got left behind – right about the mid-point of the second film, which is generally where most people agree that the concept died a death. What's that got to do with the art of tattooing?

Well, I was more trying to illustrate a point about heart and soul than anything. Each and every time you let that needle into your skin, you're telling a story about where you are in your life. You might not think you are, but that ink is pretty damn permanent. Some people save up forever, think and think and then think some more about it. Others dip into the bank, get it on and are done and dusted in a few hours. That's an individual's choice, but what would be great – and is something I really hope to get over in coming issues – would be to make sure you get your own heart and soul in there. It doesn't matter if you're looking for tribal in Torquay or getting on a plane to get yourself sorted out thousands of miles away. Be true to yourself – think about the person you are, who you're entrusting to do this for you and the message you're about to send out to the world. It's important.

Today, you may not think it is, but tomorrow it will be. Get a little bit of pride in your art.

Bloody hell, I'm getting old.

Sen



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FREE SUPPLEMENT

TATTOO JAM

16 pages of the monster annual convention



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FALLOTT

Seen an interesting clipping in the press? Got something that you'd like reviewed or featured? Got some spare chocolate or beer? Send them to: Skin Deep, The Old School, Higher Kinnerton, Chester CH4 9AJ OR EMAIL: editor@skindeep.co.uk

TATTOO ON THE BEACH

The Tattoo on the Beach public awareness event takes place in Dover, Kent on 30th - 31st October.

The event is aimed at making the public aware of all aspects of legitimate tattooing in response to the increasing instances of DIY tattooing cases in the area. With the local council seemingly lost as to where to direct themselves in these matters, three studios – No Pain No Gain, Garths Tattoo and Tribal Nations – have pooled their resources to show the public that licenced tattooing is safe and adheres as rigorously to health and safety standards as the law dictates. Whilst this is not a localised problem for the industry, this is exactly the sort of independent event that local artists can band together over and begin to make a difference on their own terms.



TRUE TATTOO

True Tattoo is a brand new large, spacious studio in the heart of Croydon town centre. The studio strives to move away from the cramped, hectic feel of a lot of studios, offering a relaxed, comfortable environment with a warm welcome. Custom tattoo, body piercing and thermal cautery branding are all on offer. You can find them at True Tattoo, 49 Frith Road, Croydon, CR0 1TB. Or myspace.com/truetattoolondon.

T-SHIRTS GET MARCHING ORDERS

Who said looking good these days was hard work? Legionnaire Army have this rather fine range of affordable gear available at their revamped online store. When pinned down and asked to explain themselves, Joe Moxley, (formerly of Meddy Clothing), and Mike

Herrera, (frontman of the punk band MxPx), offered the following excuse: "I was looking for something new, young and hip," said Moxley. "The new clothing lines I was encountering were a little junky. I thought, 'I could do better than this.'" So that's what he did. Now they not only design clothing for the people they hope will join forces with them, but for the people who have become a loyal part of the Legionnaire Army. Count us in!

www.legionnairearmy.com



RENAISSANCE TATTOO (TAKE 2)

The recently opened Renaissance Tattoo in Rickmansworth suffered a temporary setback recently after the studio was broken into and rendered totally unworkable. As with all good renaissance work, the proverbial sleeves were rolled up and the studio is once again ready for action. Drop by... say hello... rumour has it they have a rather busy kettle at their disposal. Renaissance Tattoo, 1-3 Station Road, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, WD3 1PQ, T: 01923 510877

IDOL HANDS

Andy Jones I over at Idol Hands Studio (formerly Voodoo Tattoo) in Preston, is holding a charity tattoo event in conjunction with www.thegumpathon.com to raise money for the help for heroes charity.

The event is being held over the weekend of October 30/31 from 9am until 9pm both days. Tattoos taking no longer than 50 minutes will be available for a fee of between £30 to £50 depending on size. Andy is hoping to raise over a thousand pounds. For more details: 01772 822 500 or email: idolhands@hotmail.co.uk

STOP PRESS!

Due to overwhelming demand, the event has now also been extended to take in the Monday 1st November as well.



VETTRIANO: THE MASTER TATTOOIST

Owner of an OBE for services to the visual arts, Jack Vettriano is famous for his portraits of seductive women and their immaculately suited and booted counterparts. Turning his back on the crowd-pleasing subjects that have made his name (his original artworks regularly sell for handsome six figure sums), Vettriano's latest muse is none other than world renowned tattoo artist, Mo Coppoletta.

The painting of Coppoletta, the first Vettriano portrait to be displayed in London since 2007, will be on show at the new gallery space – Heartbreak – at 17 Bulstrode Street from 16th to 26th September. Entitled 'The Master Tattooist', Vettriano's latest work forms part of a photography exhibition by Fredi Marcarini.

Featuring over 30 portraits by Marcarini, the exhibition is named after Coppoletta's London-based studio, The Family Business, and coincides with the launch of his new book, **Tattooed...** But what of Vettriano? It turns out he is a client of Coppoletta's...who also happens to appear in the new book, complete with tattoo created by Mo. Now it all starts to fall into place!



LONDON'S BURNING

The sixth London International Tattoo Convention – running this year from 24th - 26th September – is looking bigger than ever before with a huge international line-up.

With figures now estimated at one in five British adults sporting ink, Tobacco Dock will conceivably be bursting at the seams and with more than 200 artists ready to work themselves into the ground, it's an event not to be missed. The line-up includes luminaries such as Robert Hernandez, Phil Kyle and

Nicole Low (London Ink), Tim Hendricks (Miami Ink), LalHardy (New Wave), Jose Lopez and Chuey Ounitanar to name but a few.

Rest assured, you won't have nothing to do if you're waiting in line as the event also sports photographic exhibitions, live music, tribal dancers and for the adventurous; tantalising Burlesque performers from around the world.

For more information, ticket sales and any enquiries check out www.thelondontattooconvention.com.

HEAVEN N HELL

HEAVEN N HELL TATTOOS, FALKIRK held a Tattoo Marathon on Friday 13th August. Their five artists and supporting staff and friends worked for free from 9.30am - 9.30pm tattooing for charity. They managed to tattoo 135 people and raised over £3100 for the local Strathcarron Hospice. Nice work people!

THE ELECTRIC CHAIR

This October, 10 girls will compete in the chance of winning a half day tattoo session at 'The Electric Chair' in Falmouth, Cornwall. Ash Harrison of The Electric Chair will be tattooing at the event on the 29th Oct at Walkabout bar in Newquay. Each girl will perform a talent (such as burlesque, singing, poi etc) and 2 catwalks. On the judge panel, is Neely from Rogue Maidens Modelling agency, Lars Pearson from Insignia Tattoo studio in Stony Stratford and model Cervena Fox. All money raised on the door will go straight to the S.O.P.H.I.E. cause. www.facebook.com/missdollyrocker

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

Infinity Tattooing - Ross On Wye Herefordshire are moving to new premises at 111 Westgate Street Gloucester GL1 2PG 01452 502022 www.infinitytattooing.co.uk

REDEMPTION RELAUNCH

Over on the other side of the pond, Redemption - one of our favourite international tattoo studios has recently launched their new website. Voted Boston's Best Tattoo Parlor (as named by the Boston Phoenix in 2010, City Voter in 2009, Boston MagazWine in 2008, and WBZTV in 2007), Redemption have 8 solid years of business under their belt. Veteran tattooers Mike Shea and Erick Lynch, who have been tattooing collectively for over two decades, own and operate Redemption with support from tattooers Josh McAlear, Ben McClellan and Salty Dave. Shea commented, "I think the reason things are going so well for us is because we produce high quality work every day and we only hire great tattooers. There's no attitude when you come into our shop, we just want to do the best tattoos for our customers, plain and simple." Nice work guys...

GOODBYE TO A GRANDFATHER OF TATTOOING

At the end of July, German tattoo legend Herbert Hofmann died at the age of 90. Said to be the oldest active tattoo artist in the world, he was one of the old school tattoo artists who started out in an era when ink was not as widely accepted as it is today. Hofmann wasn't just an Old School tattoo artist but also a talented photographer. In fact, he published a number of books over his lifetime, including *Portraits of a Tattooing Passion 1878-1952*.

A very welcome guest at tattoo conventions in Germany and abroad, Hofmann will be missed by the tattoo community – not just for his work but also for his fantastic stories.



CORRECTION

In issue 188 we incorrectly credited this fine tattoo. The caption should have read: Mark by Garth @ Garths Tattoo, Deal, Kent. Sorry Garth!

INKOMING

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ISLAND LIFE

Dear Skin Deep,

I love your magazine. I get it ordered for me at the Spar shop I work at.

I'm 15 and live in a little island in Scotland called Mull. There are no tattoo shops and the only person who has tattoos is my rocking gothic Mum, Anna.

I'm going to be a tattoo artist when I'm older, so I love reading tattoo magazines (yours is by far the best) and loved Kat Von D's 'LA Ink' so I just wanted to thank you guys for fulfilling my tattoo-loving needs.

Please can you put this letter in your next issue so my Mum and I can read it and feel part of the tattoo world, because we are stranded on this anti-tattoo island.

Cheers

Lana and Anna

P.S. I loved the pin up girl tattoo calendar and the cover girls get better looking every issue!

TWO SIDES OF THE COIN

Dear Skin Deep

Following on from your editorial in issue 183 and Nick's letter in issue 187, I believe that anyone can open a studio if they have enough money. Take my local small town as an example there are two studios, both licensed by the local health authority and as my existing artist no longer tattoos, I was looking to get some more work done. One studio has no examples of their work anywhere to be seen, just flash on the wall; I was ignored by the guys on the counter and they just continued playing a game on the computer. When I asked if they had any pics they said "look on the website" I asked for the address and was told to use Google. I then asked whether

they had an autoclave to be told abruptly "we don't need one as we use disposable needles and tips, anyhow, autoclaves are expensive". If I was new to tattoos this would just cement the opinion some sadly have of the art. I have since found out they only use disposable tips and NOT grips or back stems so I have reported them to the local health authority. The website had very poor quality tattoos on it which looked technically bad with poor line work, shoddy shading and blotchy colour work and this is their best work!

The other studio was the polar opposite; the guys were friendly and answered all questions regarding sterilisation techniques etc. I have seen their work "in the flesh" and it is good. So in a few

weeks time I will be getting my next piece at the second studio.

I think that tattoo artists should be made to do a competency exam prior to getting a license as hairdressers have to and if they mess up sooner or later, their work will disappear and they are not putting lives at risk!

I think self regulation could work if the correct people are chosen but some artists do not worry about scratchers and indeed encourage them and I quote "As it's easy money sorting out their f*** ups!" This quote came from a registered tattoo artist who sells cheap, poor quality and dangerous Chinese kits at the local car boot sale with a sign saying "make easy money tattooing your mates". I asked the chap about the kit pretending to be a buyer, that's when I found out he was registered. He even sells the kits out of his shop apparently! So this shows the poor attitude of some.

A license does not mean quality, it means the studios health regulations were followed at point of inspection. People need to ask about sterilisation procedures, see examples of work in the flesh as pictures can easily be doctored and research prospective artists before getting a tattoo.

Yours

Kevin Jackson

DRAW THE LINE

Dear Skin Deep

I am writing to you in the hope that someone will understand where I am coming from. An awful lot of tattooists seem to give out bad vibes about the TV series Miami Ink. But I plea for someone to hear me out when I say not all of us are in it too be cool or have the rock and roll lifestyle that the television series has made. I do nothing other than hope and pray that I can be like my idols such as Joe Myler and Jack Mosher, both of whom have their own unique style. I want to be like that.

When I enter a shop saying "Hello my name is John, nice to meet you - I am interested in becoming a tattooist, are there any

tips you can give me on what to draw to make up my portfolio?" Everything is going great until they ask what age I am and why I don't have any tattoos yet. My reply is normally "Well I'm younger than I look" and I go on to tell them I'm 16 and they laugh and say let me guess "Miami Ink".

I'm too shy or humiliated to reply so I just kind of walk on out of the shop. Instead I should tell them what really gave me my inspiration. I go to sleep at night and dream of tattoos. All I do is talk about tattoos, thinking about putting your own artwork on someone is an honour that they are trusting you to do a good job. I just wanted to share my view and hopefully someday, the artists will realise not every teenager that wants to be a tattooist is just a kid thinking they would like to be cool. Thanks for listening.

Sincerely

John Murphy

Thanks John.

While I think your statement is a bit sweeping, generalised and slightly unfair to the majority of artists that I know, I see what you're saying here. The bottom line is that if this is really how you feel, draw. Draw, draw and draw some more until you can't possibly get any better at it. When you get to that point, draw some more because you will probably be kidding yourself that you are good enough. If you seriously want to be the best tattoo artist the world has ever seen, prove it. Get an apprenticeship, never stop drawing and while you're still underage get yourself a business education. You can't let a few duff experiences colour your worldview either. If you're that shy, run your self-education online where you have the world at your feet and you can hide behind email until you have got the confidence you need. I should also say, the world doesn't need another Jack Mosher. The world might need you later on, but it certainly doesn't need another Mosher - he's doing fine all by himself.

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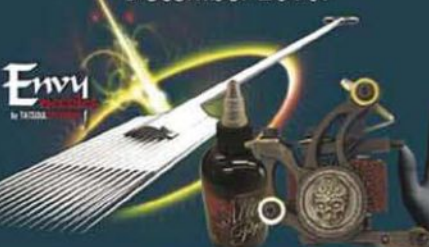
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NOT JUST A PRETTY FACE



Sophie aka So Ladycat

Judging by the amount of mail we get on a daily basis - yes, daily - it strikes us that there are big, big numbers of Skin Deep readers out there who are interested in kick starting careers in modelling - specifically and rather obviously, of the inked variety.

Globally, the opportunities are seemingly endless with most - if not all - off the shelf tattoo magazines featuring some variant on the theme. Rather than offer up an editorial perspective on the odds of this happening for you, (which to be honest I can sum up by saying - act like

You must be professional, be on time when you have a photoshoot, gain the respect of all the people who work with you otherwise your career will be very short!

a professional and use a professional photographer), we thought it would make sense to have somebody who actually does the work who is still climbing the ladder do the commentary for us.

As luck would have it, I crowbarred some time in Cannes with So Ladycat to talk about this very thing. While it's not essential to change your name to something that resembles a character from Barbarella, it does help set you apart if your real name is umm, how shall we say... not so memorable?

"I started three years ago, by working, working, working a lot! My first photoshoot wasn't good enough, so I worked with more and more photographers until we made THE good picture! When I do a photoshoot, I'm not a simple model, I have to work on the

entire project to make sure it is right for me. I find the place where to shoot, I choose clothes, I do my own make-up and hair. I also read as many tattoo magazines as I can to understand what they were looking for and whether I have done what I need to do for them.

I started about nine years ago to sing and write (I am also a singer), and instinctively, I had to do some pictures to promote my work. At that time I wasn't tattooed but once I had started - and I have a lot of ink done now - I found a real interest in a modelling career. I'm not a big fan of "mode" photoshoots, I like when there's a real story in a picture - being a tattooed model certainly offers more possibilities!"

"To me, being a model is just as important as singing and writing. These 3 things are the most important parts of my life. I don't do that for money, I do it because it's as necessary to me as breathing or eating! I love making all those things. I need to be creative, I need to express my feelings. I stopped all my artistic works for more than a year around 2008 because I lost one of the most important souls in my life. It was as if I was empty. I didn't have anything to say or to show. So I can't say if I'll do this forever, life will decide for me, but but I have so many things to express, so I will keep on doing it as long as I can."

Here at Skin Deep, we're currently looking at our stance on the amount of photo manipulation that goes on behind the scenes in the creation of model photographs - speaking as a model, do you have strong opinions on this?

"I think everyone is free to make what they want. Everyone has his



own vision of beautiful and artistic things. I love it when photographers use Photoshop to change the contrast for example, make something into an old style picture or basically use it to create special effects. What I hate is to be retouched, myself. I mean, I want people to recognize me when they meet me! I'm not a skinny girl, and I'm a real small woman, and I'm proud about that!"

So, if we can pretend for a moment that you have an audience with Skin Deep readers, can you give us some key facts that might shed some light on the subject for them?

"Damn - who am I to give advice! I have so many things to learn!"

"Firstly, be curious - in everything! Get some interest in many things, it's the best way to get a good grounding in culture, and then to make good things happen from it."

"But, secondly, keep your own style. Don't try to be like "this one" or to make things like "this other one", it doesn't have any kind of interest for you in the long-term."

"Also, I'd say that you have to believe in you, no matter what some people"





may say about you. Of course, you have to listen to every kind of critic, good and bad, but the only thing to listen to is the little voice inside of you."

"You must be professional, be on time when you have a photoshoot, gain the respect of all the people who work with you otherwise your career will be very short!"

"Most importantly, stay real! Keep your family and good friends near you, people in whom you can trust. You will need them!"

It's only fair being as you've taken time out to do this with me that I let you tell me more about your singing – this is your shot!

"As I said before, I started my singing-writing career 9 years ago. It's really important to me to write my own lyrics (my poetry book was published some years ago). I've worked with many composers, recording some songs - like my covers of Lollipop and Sugar Sugar. Now I am working with Eric Soulas and recording a demo of 12 songs. Right now, we are working with a professional musician to record some of our songs as professionally as possible, to get the chance to be listened to by producers and labels. At the moment it's more a studio project – but the principles of creating this are exactly the same as those for modelling. You can listen to my work at: www.myspace.com/soladycat"

"I think the internet is a fantastic way to show off your work and to get a connection with fans and get better at what you do, but I don't really believe that it can offer real success."

"To make it work I know I need a team around me to promote myself, because I'm not really good at that sort of promotional work! Though someone did ask me recently where he could buy a book of my photoshoots. I thought it could be a good idea but at the moment the most important project is to record my album. I keep my myspace page up to date all the time if people wish to know what I am doing!" ★

Secretly, my big dream is that someday, I could buy a big house and adopt all sad and lonely cats! I know that I can't live without them. If humans took the time to appreciate animals qualities, I think we would be in a good place!



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TEXT AND PHOTOS NEIL DALLEY-WATER

LIVERPOOL

"I have heard of the greatness of Liverpool but the reality far surpasses my expectation" Prince Albert

TATTOO CONVENTION

He'll, with an opening quote like that, you'd be forgiven for thinking that we'd exhumed His Royal Highness to take in a weekend on Merseyside for what has fast become the most invigorating tattoo show of the year. Not so, but his words regarding the city in the 1800s could well be applied to this incredible weekend of body art, although I'm none too sure on what he'd make of the piercing bearing

his name... I digress, so let's move swiftly on.

The majority of conventions to emerge over the past couple of years have steadily forged a more impressive show, but Liverpool has been something of an exception to this rule in that they have taken leaps (rather than steps) forward - they didn't so much rip up the rulebook as build a wicker man, throw the book inside, douse it in petrol, and set that sucker ablaze. They've instigated the now-famous Tattoo Duels, introduced impartial awards for those who document the tattoo world, and generally brought a sense of fun to the convention table. As for the actual running of the show, it's like a finely tuned machine; the staff are friendly without being overbearing, and if a request is made (no matter how grand or minute) then heaven and earth are moved to make it possible. This only adds to the relaxed nature of the Liverpool convention and no matter how busy it gets - and it does get hectic - the crew keep everything ticking over smoothly.

Tony and Hazel Nichols have never been content with a 'regular' compère for the Liverpool show, so following on from the late Frank Sidebottom (oh Frank, how we shall miss thee) was the



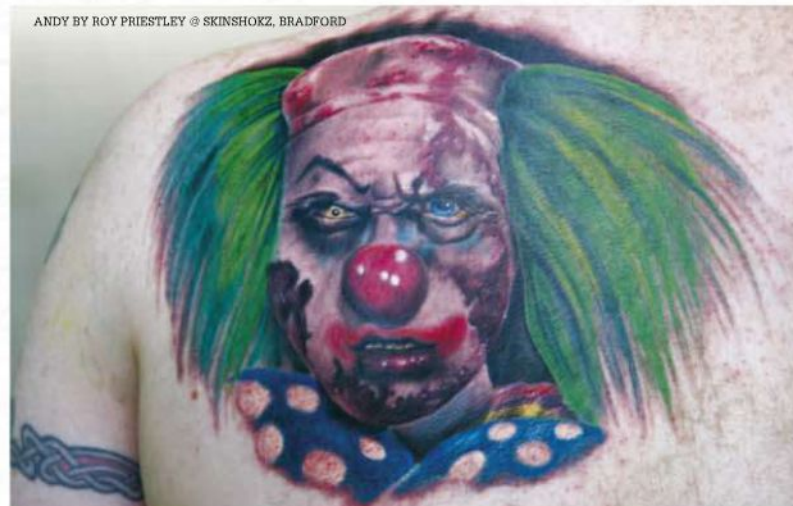
MR NEATEARD BY CHRIS JONES © PHYSICAL GRAFFITI, CAIDIFF



As the home of the Tattoo Duel, this year's instalments were as thrilling as ever, with each tattooist pitted against another with a theme to follow.

elastic and comedic Chris Cross, a contortionist. If you're going to have a compère, then it has to be a person who can hold a crowd for an entire weekend without driving the masses to contemplate murder by Sunday afternoon, and in fairness to the flexible Geordie fella, he managed this admirably. Chris wasn't without a few bemused looks cast his way, although not for the reasons you may imagine – one American artist pointed him out to me and asked, "Dude, is that Russell Brand?"

As the home of the Tattoo Duel, this year's instalments were as thrilling as ever, with each tattooist pitted against another with a theme to follow and a strict time limit to adhere to. What I love most about this aspect of the show is that the assembled tattoo aficionados vote in a ballot to determine a winner in each battle, adding a greater sense of participation on their behalf. The losers were consequently splattered with custard pies by the victor and the ensuing mess found its way to compère Mr. Cross on more than one occasion!☺



MANDY BY SISTA SAMMY @ FALLEN ANGEL TATTOO, LIVERPOOL



The tattooists were spread across three rooms to accommodate a larger number than the previous year. Expansions such as this can spell trouble because it's often tricky to maintain a vibrant atmosphere throughout a show's venue, but not so for the Liverpool contingent: the edifice was rocking all weekend long! Liverpool continually attracts an eclectic cross-section of the tattoo community and it's truly the people that make a show great. Without atmosphere, you have nothing to build

Liverpool continually attracts an eclectic cross-section of the tattoo community and it's truly the people that make a show great.



ANDY BY TOM SUGAR @ GLOBAL TATTOOS, WIRRAL



CAROLINE BY HELEN BROWN @ GUNG HO, BIRMINGHAM



DANNY BY TOM SUGAR @ GLOBAL TATTOOS, WIRRAL



SCOTT BY RYAN @ INDIGO TATTOO, NORTHWICH





MARCUS BY KYLE COTTERMAN @ SMARTBOMB TATTOOS, USA



ABI BY MARCUS MAGUIRE @ CUSTOM INC, SCOTLAND



DAVID BY MARK BAILEY @ GOLDEN DRAGON TATTOOS, CHESTER

And The Winners Are...

Best Black and Grey Small

Deborah Connolly by Sister Sammy @ Fallen Angel, Liverpool

Best Black and Grey Large

Stephen Crolla by Jin @ Evolution Tattoo, Oxford

Best Colour Small

Jules Maguire by Billy Hay @ Custom Inc., Glasgow

Best Colour Large

Damien Speight by Paul Priestley @ Skinshokz, Bradford

Best Realistic

Danny by Tom Sugar @ Alan's Tattoo Studio, Moreton

Best of Day Saturday

Jade Hamilton by Miss Mindy @ Studio XIII, USA

Best of Day Sunday

Marcus Maguire by Kyle Cotterman @ Smart Bomb Tattoo, USA

Best of Convention

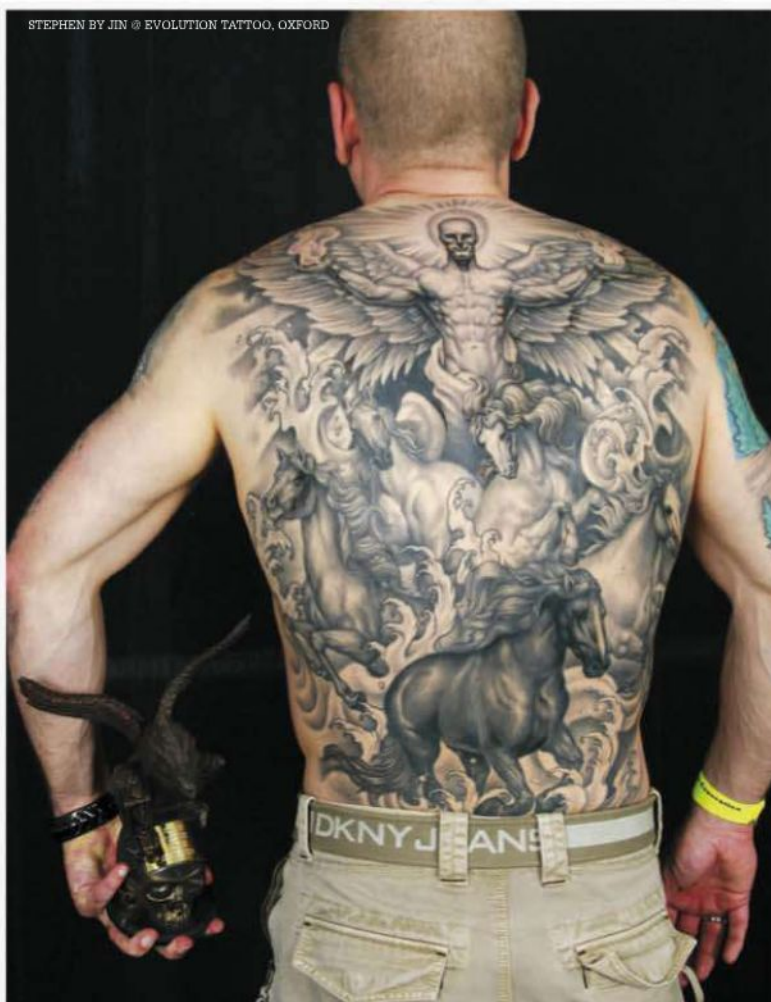
Damien Speight by Paul Priestley @ Skinshokz, Bradford

upon, and it's testament to those who make the pilgrimage each year that this warm and affable vibe permeates the entire building.

Perhaps the unrivalled ambience is due in no small part to the shindigs that surround the Liverpool show (soirées take place on Friday, Saturday and Sunday night) so what better way to bring people together than utilising Liverpool's reputation as a party town and hosting get-togethers in different venues each night? This was the second year that I checked into my hotel in the early morning hours after spending the evening dancing around my suitcase with a whole host of tattooists (you know who you are!) I mean, who uses a handbag anymore? Evening gatherings bond artists and collectors and guide the weekend through a celebration of art, which is essentially what tattoo conventions are, and who doesn't enjoy the odd libation in the company of friends old and new?

I was lucky enough to once again sit on the judging panel for many of the weekend's tattoo competitions, and I kid you not, the level of tattoos on display skyrockets every single year. Wave after wave of sumptuous dermal decor made its way to the judges' table (still attached to the limbs and torsos of respective owners, might I add) for my peers and I to cast a critical eye over. I know, we wax lyrical about how tattooing is perpetually evolving and blasting through the stratosphere of possibility, but it appears that the rate of this evolution is rapidly increasing. Suffice to say, selecting the winners was a tricky task and those who collected awards were deserving of their trophies! ➡

Evening gatherings bond artists and collectors and guide the weekend through a celebration of art.



STEPHEN BY JIN @ EVOLUTION TATTOO, OXFORD



Duels

**Leah Moule Vs
Gray Silva**

"Carnival Freakshow"

Winner **Leah Moule**

**Billy 'the Bastard'
Hay Vs Matt Lapping**

"House of Fun"

Winner **Billy Hay**

**Roy Priestley
Vs Gary Wiedenhof**

"Coulrophobia"

Winner **Roy Priestley**

**Mark Bailey Vs
Eze Nunez**

"Carnival of Souls"

Winner **Mark Bailey**

Elsewhere in the guild hall, the Battle of the Bands competition raged in full force with a wondrous cacophony shaking the building's foundations to their very core. Outspoken Silence scooped the accolade with a ferocious performance – keep an ear out for these guys, as they are something very special indeed – and This Is Turin came in second. It's a pleasure to have a diverse selection of music on offer and it's apparent that care and consideration is given to the selection of bands participating in this contest. Music aside, burlesque acts kept the momentum rolling for those seeking respite from the frantic buzz of the tattooing areas, and the ladies put on quite a show for the assembled crowd.

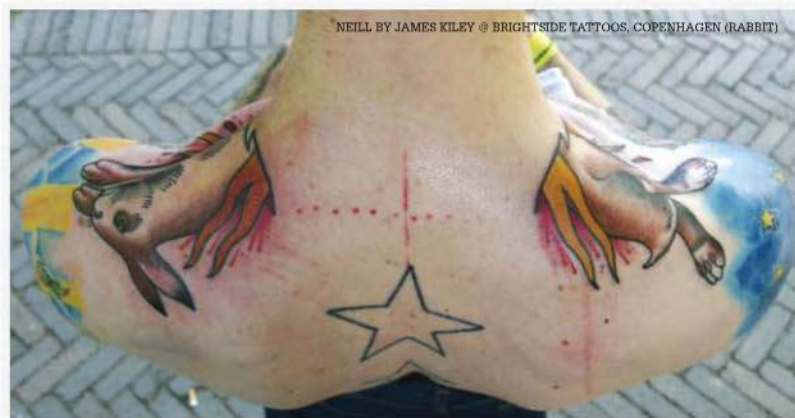
In closing, what makes for a great convention is often a topic of debate, so I can only proffer what I see as the essential elements of a world class tattoo show.

For me, a great tattoo convention is based in a vibrant city; boasts excellent artists (established and upcoming); has an electric atmosphere generated by enthusiastic attendees; and is driven by the organisers' continued desire to innovate for the benefit of those who attend. So, in my humble opinion, you won't find a better UK tattoo convention than Liverpool. ★

In my humble opinion, you won't find a better UK tattoo convention than Liverpool.



DARREN BY FUCKING FAT, SPAIN



NEILL BY JAMES KILEY @ BRIGHTSIDE TATTOOS, COPENHAGEN (RABBIT)



DAMIAN BY SEBASTIAN @ TATTOO GONZO, POLAND

JENNIE BY LISA TOVE @ INDIGO TATTOO, NORTHWICH

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Volko Merschky and Simone Pfaff are the most unassuming artists I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. Both are softly spoken, humble in their

estimation of their own work and professional to the core. This, combined with their far superior command of English than my German, makes it an absolute thrill to be in their company.

The first time I met our intrepid pair, I was so taken with their unique style, I demanded to be immediately added to their rather long waiting list and bludgeoned them with questions out of genuine personal curiosity, totally forgetting that I should probably have been recording the inquisition for a

future interview. Moments like this happen rarely in life. That first listen to an album that you know you'll love for the rest of your life, meeting somebody that you have to make no effort to get along with... it fell into that category for me and the reason behind it was good old simple honesty.

You may look at their creations and decide they're not for you. You may also look and not get what's going on. You too may also fall in love. This is what true art does - it evokes a response at the emotional level that demands either taking part or moving on. They have branded their unique style as Realistic Trash Polka. It's an obvious question to start the ball rolling - one that causes much hushed conversation in their



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THIS IS WHAT TRUE ART DOES - IT EVOKES A RESPONSE AT THE EMOTIONAL LEVEL THAT DEMANDS EITHER TAKING PART OR MOVING ON.

mother tongue wanting nothing more than to get this right for the record:

"Well, the tattoo designs we create don't fit into any known or common styles, so we made up our minds to think of a term that would describe it best. We came up with Realistic Trash Polka because all in all, it's a mixture of realistic elements combined with abstract or sometimes, graphic parts which represent the 'trash' part of the phrase. While this may be an unusual combination, it's familiar from music, as a polka. So, the term polka comes from our inspiration from the music - especially from our own music and songwriting. Basically, Realistic Trash Polka is all of those things combined with what happens when we come together to

create. It's simply the two of us, our name, our brand and our style."

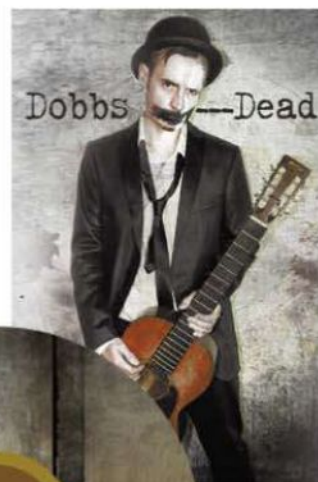
I look confused and it shows. It's hard to wrap your head around what polka actually is when the last band you saw live was Alice Cooper. For the sake of continuity and understanding though, I nod knowingly - and have since established - that it's a dance and a genre of music that originates from central Europe, but I'm not going to let my ignorance of European culture derail me...

"You see, when you come to us, you have two opportunities. The first is to give us total freedom to create the art freehand - but the customer can also give a certain theme if they wish, maybe some keywords in combination with a song, poem or a quote. Out of ☛

DOBBS DEAD: BIRTH

As with Volko and Simone's art, the debut Dobbs Dead album may not be for everyone but if you can get your head around what they are trying to achieve, over time, many secrets will unfold from this little gem. Being more or less totally acoustically based, Volko will take you down a very dark road if you choose to follow. For fans of artists like Willard Grant Conspiracy, Midlake and Efterklang the understanding will come easy as Volko lyrically travels a parallel path. Haunting, heartfelt and dramatically understated because there are no drums, no bass - nothing to force a rhythm, the sole power of the album comes from the poetic/lyrical capability.

Much like ABBA and Hanoi Rocks and many other European bands that choose to perform in the English language, the lyrical delivery is ever so slightly left of centre in the best way possible and adds a dimension that would never be possible if English was their native tongue. To deliver lines such as "There's a man in a park, sitting there on a wall" with any degree of authenticity takes no small amount of talent but Volko takes it to a place



where it truly means something.

With plans to perform the material live, it will be interesting to see how this pans out - Volko and Simone wearing their hearts on their sleeves will surely be

a sight to behold. Meantime, each subsequent listen to the album brings new dimensions. It's like digging earth - whenever I go back to it, I swear it delivers a song I didn't hear the last time. Dobbs Dead are an acquired taste that's for sure, but one that I can't get out of my mouth.

If Bob Dylan composed a soundtrack for a Dario Argento movie, it may sound a lot like this...

A FEW ARTISTS HAVE STARTED TO WORK IN THEIR OWN STYLE AND REALLY ARE PRODUCING DESIGNS THAT HAVE NEVER BEEN SEEN BEFORE.

this, the design will be created by us from our understanding of the theme. By doing it this way, we can always be sure to develop our style and create completely unique designs that are one of a kind."

The brief lull for an intake of water gives me pause for thought - surely then, along with giving some clues as to what sort of person you are and the kind of design you're looking for in the Trash Polka style, it's just as important to mention any imagery you particularly don't want as well?

"Yes, of course, but you mustn't confuse that with telling us exactly what you want in the design, that's not

how we work. It is more an abstract way of working - working with moods - desperate, happiness etcetera - that kind of input lets us work to our best." "You see, before we became tattoo artists, we went to art school and through this we learned a lot. It may be that the Trash Polka style came about from our paintings and drawings. Step by step, we got more ideas to design tattoos in this way and over time, we found we had many customers who were open minded enough and trusted us. Without them, we wouldn't have had a chance to tattoo this style at all!"

We all take a moment in time to let this sink in - as though a stake has been

driven into the ground claiming the territory - and it feels right. So do they ever take the time to check into the larger world view and see what others are doing in this creative space?

"In the last few years, it has become more common to tattoo designs or styles that belong more to art than well known tattoo styles. A few artists have started to work in their own style and really are producing designs that have never been seen before. But for sure, the more creativity and originality there is out there, the easier it is for others to come to the table with different and new styles. There are always artists who are happy to copy but this is not our way at all - we think it is better to see the new designs and be inspired to make even more new styles and designs."

"We are at our best when we work together, getting inspiration from each



THE ART OF DESIGN



"We are fully booked for at least two years now. We have come a long way from the days when I was studying interior design and Simone was studying graphic design - we also did photography. We were involved in art for a long time before we came to tattooing - in fact, there are many years of learning more and more about art behind us until we began tattooing. We started by drawing on each other, painting each other and only then did we begin to learn how to tattoo. People were a little reluctant to come to us at first but now, we have reached a place where we have this long waiting list but we try to see as many people as we can as well. We do many conventions in Europe but do not tend to get very much further than that because we are quite afraid of flying! We drove the car to the Tattoo Jam this year!"





other and discussing our ideas - it is only out of this environment that the style and the tattoo designs develop. In fact, we work so closely and have so much the same style, that there is virtually no difference in the way of working our creations. We don't have to explain our ideas in detail to each other, each of us gives an idea or proposal for the design that can be an inspiration for the other and so on."

"We always saw tattoos as art, not as tattoos in themselves. We made new designs and sketches for each new customer. Apart from tattooing, we do a lot of drawing and paintings as well, simply because we are interested in all kinds of art."

Over the years, I must have talked to hundreds of artists in all manner of genres, ranging from tattoo artists to surf artists and poster creators but I've never come across artists that have harnessed colour in quite the way Simone and Volko have - and it's not that obvious either. It's almost as if something rather supernaturally subtle happens when they come to understanding the way colours work with each other:

"This is strange. People often ask us whether we use special ink or needles or techniques to make the colours look that strong and bright, but we do not use anything different than other artists. For sure, the quality of needles, inks and everything we use is very important to us, but we have no secret about it. We often use red because it is a light colour - one that fits nicely with skin tone, but at the same time, has enough contrast to the skin to be seen well. In combination with black, you get a great contrast - but we do use other colours apart from reds and oranges - for some reason, many think those are the only colours we use!"

While I point out that this is plainly not

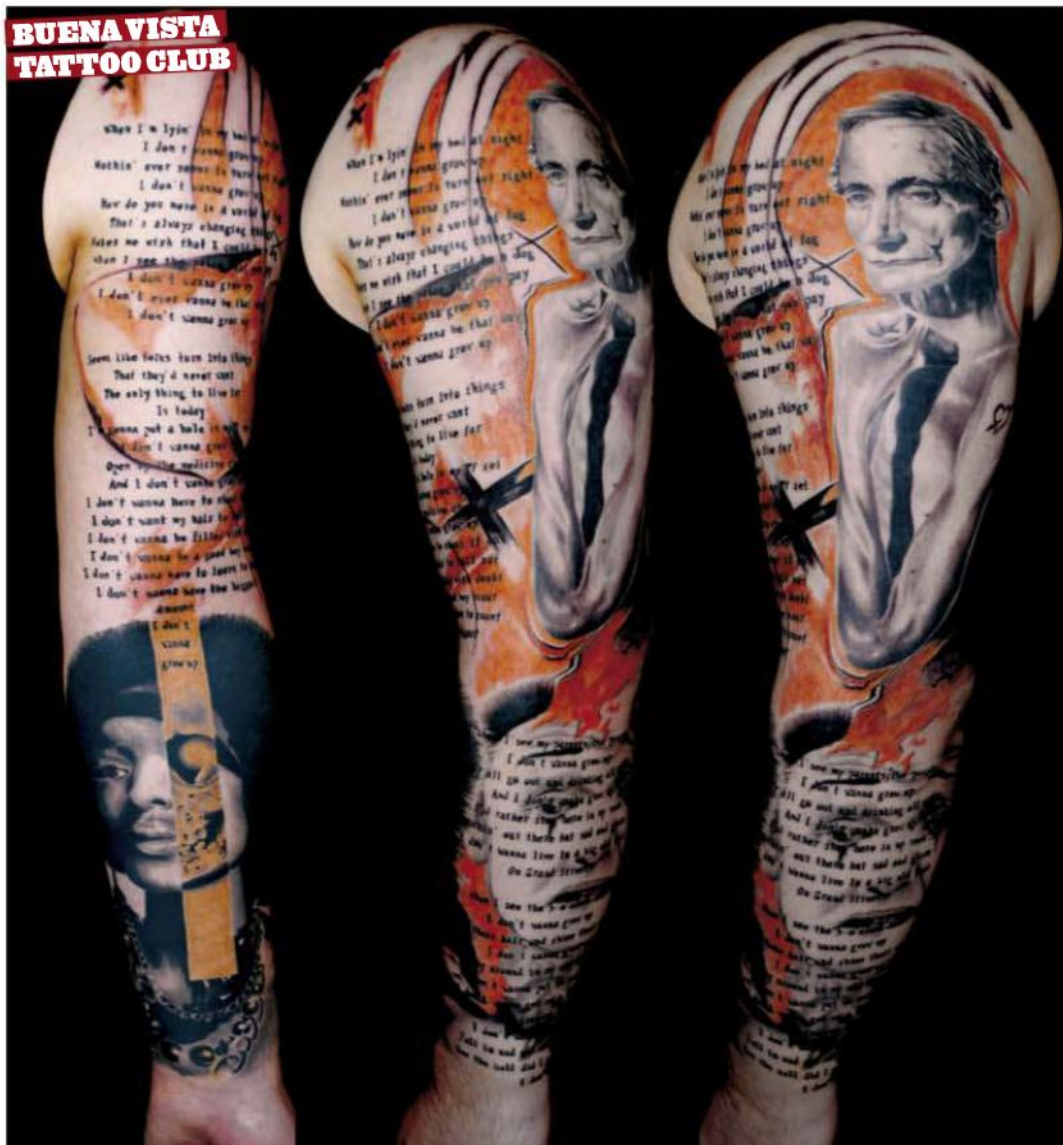
true - just take a look at the art on display here - the perception may be taken that way because the red/black contrast is almost genetic in a human's approach to appreciating contrasting colours, but we're on a roll and aren't going to stop to prey on this for too long...

"As artists it is important to develop, work on new ideas and never stand still. It is bad for the soul to work on the same designs for years and never create something new. This is also what we tell our customers - we encourage them to get a unique design. We never do anything twice and because of this we are forced to create new things all the

IT'S ALMOST AS IF SOMETHING RATHER SUPERNATURALLY SUBTLE HAPPENS WHEN THEY COME TO UNDERSTANDING THE WAY COLOURS WORK WITH EACH OTHER.

time. When we look back at a design - something we did maybe a year ago - there is always a big difference to where we are now and we continually get new ideas for upcoming tattoos, so we are pretty sure that the designs will





change! As this is an evolutionary process, we cannot prophesise how our designs will look when the customer turns up for the work! We hope though, that our customers will like it and are as much interested in this type of art as we are. Years ago, we both did all kinds of styles in our tattooing but now we both only work in Trash Polka."

Our time is coming to an end, and I'm reluctant to take away from the magic of art by examining it too much - sometimes, great art simply "is" and doesn't need drilling into for an explanation, but knowing Volko and Simone as I do now, I figure no conversation would be complete without mentioning their little side project, Dobbs Dead - although how long it will remain 'little' is questionable these days:

"We are both very interested in music. We have been playing different kinds of music and instruments for years and so we decided to produce our own CD.

Dobbs Dead is starting to grow and we can already see it taking a bigger part in our life and work. Soon, we will play some live concerts - for this we have found some really good musicians to work with - and we plan on going on stage in the Autumn. In our free time, we are already working on and planning the next album. As soon as there is concrete news - you will be the first to know!" ★



**AS THIS IS AN EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS,
WE CANNOT PROPHESEISE HOW OUR
DESIGNS WILL LOOK WHEN THE
CUSTOMER TURNS UP FOR THE WORK!**



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STATE OF THE ART



Derby's State of the Art tattoo, body art and music festival kicked off to a storming start on Saturday 17th July 2010, marking the tenth anniversary of this legendary convention weekend. Queuing punters filled the main hall setting the tempo for a very busy weekend indeed.



MARY BY AMANDA WEST AT ALZOME TATTOO GLOUCESTER

Over 100 artists were kept busy and it was great to have the opportunity to watch several pieces taking shape over the course of the two days. From my vantage point on the stall belonging to local heroes Lifetime Tattoo, I could see the Russian dolls piece by Adam Nelson taking shape on the leg of his client Kelly. This was just one of the many interesting and excellent tattoos underway and it was an honour to watch the artists at work. Jason Butcher's high impact black and grey work continues to impress and his portrait of Dave Grohl was stunning to behold.

Despite the strong attendance from some great tattooers from out of town, it would be hard to ignore the concentration of brilliant artists from the Midlands. Gathered in one room, the strength of tattoo talent based in the Midlands makes a Brummie boy like me very proud. Leah Moule was a pleasure to watch at work and the Modern Body Art contingent continued to excel, represented by Mat Hunt and new crew member Rachel McCarthy.

The Derby venue ensured that much of the ink on display was done by either the Lifetime or 7th Day studios. The artists from both shops should be proud of their work which was showcased at the convention. I was particularly impressed with Amy's wings by Kev

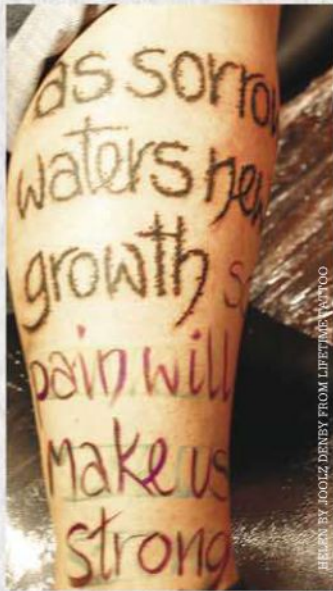
Despite the strong attendance from some great tattooists from out of town, it would be hard to ignore the concentration of brilliant artists from the Midlands.



JOHNNY SPEEDKINGS BY BEN AT LIFETIME TATTOO DERBY



BEN BY GRAY SILVA OF RAMPANT INK



HELEN BY JOOLZ DENBY FROM LIFETIME TATTOO



HEATHER BY STEVE CALLEBURG AT INKWORKS IN CLETHORP

at 7th Day and the pink lilies inked on Tony by Ben at Lifetime. That said; it was hard to choose a favourite.

Joolz Denby continued to innovate with her art on Saturday, combining her work as a poet and a tattooer in the same piece. The script from Joolz's poem 'Redemption' in her own inimitably beautiful writing style was inked onto Helen's leg. This is to be the first of several sittings where a different piece of the poem is tattooed onto a different body part - a rare and unique tattoo and one which both parties found superbly fulfilling.

The slick organisation was evident throughout this well planned and well established event and there was plenty of support available for artists, traders

The script from Joolz's poem 'Redemption' in her own inimitably beautiful writing style was inked onto Helen's leg.



JUSTIN BURNOUT BY PIOTRECK TATON AND PETE BROWN BY KEV AT 7TH DAY



KATE JOHNSON FROM 2 GUNS



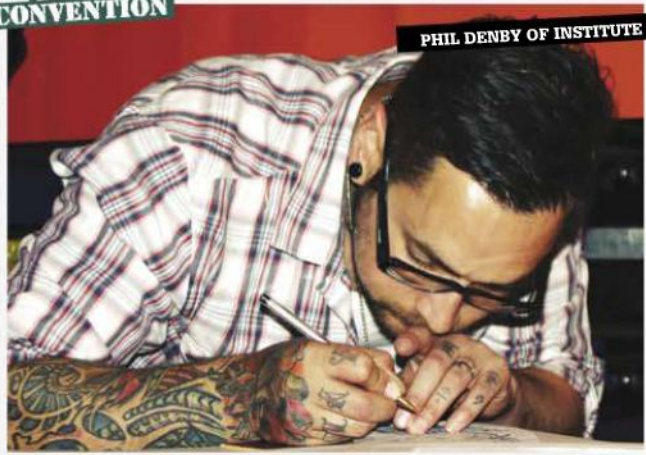
KELLY BY ADAM OF NELSON INK



LEENA BY DAVE BUK OF COSMIC TATTOO BRADFORD



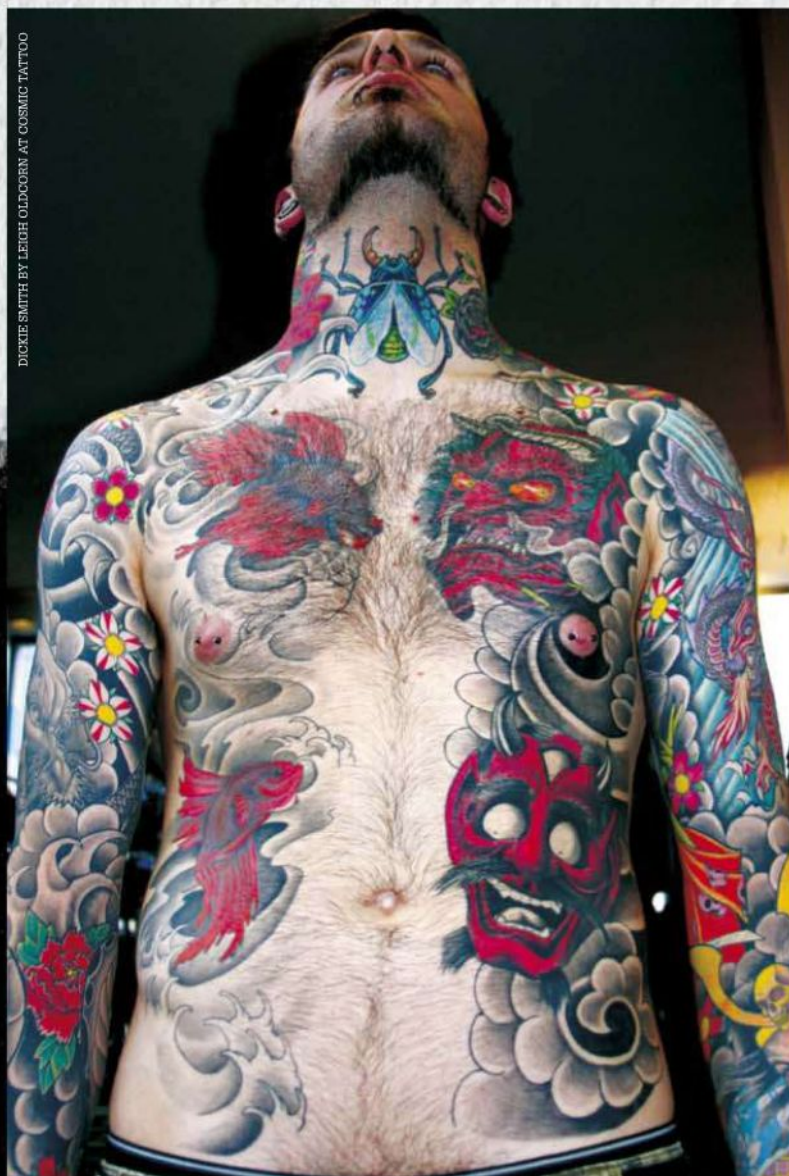
JANE BY SARA HUDJIN FROM GOOD TIMES TATTOO



and punters alike. A noteworthy addition to the usual convention fare was the trade only artists' area where tattooers can purchase the tools of their trade and where traders can showcase their wares. Other attractions included a plethora of gift and clothing stalls, café, bars, burlesque girls and live music performances.

Yes, State of the Art has it all, and lots of it too. See you there next year! ★

DICKIE SMITH BY LEIGH OLDGORN AT COSMIC TATTOO



Yes, State of the Art has it all, and lots of it too. See you there next year!



AMY BY BEN AT LIFETIME DERBY (IN PROGRESS)



BRIONY BY REV AT 7TH DAY DERBY



AMY BY 7TH DAY



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THE OWL HAS LANDED!

It's always great to focus on homegrown talent and this month we headed out to Northwich to hunt down Ryan Davies for the conversation of lifetime. Once you start the big man off, there's no stopping him...

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WHEN DID YOU FIRST GET INTO TATTOOING?

I was 17 when I first started, at a studio called 'Devil Bitch' in Rotherham. Simon, the guy who taught me, now works in Versus Steel. I was there for a few years and learnt a lot before I left. I've been at Indigo for three years now.

WAS IT AN APPRENTICESHIP THEN?

In a fashion it was. They're alright guys and I just fitted in. An apprenticeship is definitely the way you should get into tattooing. There are too many people just grabbing a machine these days. At least I had some guidance when I first started out. There was a guy from Barnsley

called Chris Marsden who helped me a lot and I did alright in the end.

SO YOU GOT STARTED BY GOING TO STUDIOS AND BADGERING THE SHIT OUT OF THEM?

Pretty much. The first time I was getting tattooed, I asked whether they would teach me but they just said 'no'. I was at college doing art at the time, so during the lunch hour I'd go down to the studio, get the guy a coffee and do some general running around. In the end I won him over and he said 'yes'.

DID YOU FINISH COLLEGE?

Yeah, I got a diploma in art and design.



I enjoyed it; it was cool and has certainly helped me out in this job.

HOW DID YOU FIND WORKING AS A TATTOO ARTIST IN THE EARLY DAYS? WAS IT EASY TO START WITH?

No. It is hands down the hardest thing I've ever done. It's just so different. There are so many ways to do artwork but tattooing is easily the hardest, simply because there's no magic involved. You've got one shot and one shot only. Add to that the pressure of having to deliver in front of someone and it gets really tough. Half the battle is acting like you know what you're doing. You've always got someone watching you and it's got to be perfect. I nearly quit a couple of times, well I came close anyway.

WHAT WERE THE REASONS?

I just didn't think I could do it. I was full of self-doubt, thought it was far

too hard and also made a couple of really bad mistakes. I thought, 'I can't do this'. If it weren't for a couple of really good mates, who told me that I was bound to make mistakes and that's what makes you better, I probably would have packed it in.

ONCE YOU GOT YOUR SKILLS UP, YOU CAME OVER TO INDIGO THEN?

Well, I left Simon's place and was bumming around for a while, not knowing what to do. I knew I wanted to tattoo, but couldn't find premises to do it. Then I saw an ad in Skin Deep and called and we hit it off. It was a bit scary at 21, never having lived away from home, but I'm glad I did it and it has definitely helped my career.

IF IT WEREN'T FOR A COUPLE OF REALLY GOOD MATES, WHO TOLD ME THAT I WAS BOUND TO MAKE MISTAKES AND THAT'S WHAT MAKES YOU BETTER

I moved from Rotherham to take the job. At first I'd just come and do a few days, but then I got more and more work and eventually did full time. Now I've got a family here and everything.

SPEAKING OF YOUR FAMILY, WHEN YOUR LITTLE BOY IS OLDER, DO YOU THINK TATTOOING WOULD BE A GOOD INDUSTRY FOR HIM TO BE IN?

Providing he wants to – I'd never force ☺



**I LIKE COLOUR. PROBABLY
SOMETHING TO DO WITH MY
GRAFFTTI BACKGROUND...IT'S A
LOT MORE NATURAL AND MAKES
A LOT MORE SENSE TO ME.**

him into it. Of course I'd love him to but the industry has such a mixed bag of personalities and it's not for everyone. Some people just aren't cut out for it. But if he is, then by all means. Of course there are pitfalls but generally it's a good industry to be in.

**WHAT WOULD YOU CLASS YOUR
STYLE AS? COLOUR WORK?**

I like colour. Probably something to do with my graffiti background...it's a lot more natural and makes a lot more sense to me. Obviously, working here has brought my black and grey work on a lot, but I would say my passion is colour. I do a lot of Japanese, which is cool, but quite limited at the minute, because people aren't that prepared to push the boat out and try things a little bit more exotic...they'll only try a dragon or a geisha. There's only so many times you can do them without getting a little bored of it!

I'm getting into bio-mechanical, I really enjoy that. I also enjoy the fact you can do absolutely anything with tattoos, coming up with designs straight off the top of your head. That appeals to me, the freedom of it. You can do whatever you want. It's not just the designing of the tattoos though, it's the placement, body structure and everything being taken into account.



**WHO ARE YOUR INFLUENCES
AT THE MOMENT?**

There's a lot of good stuff out there and so many good artists coming through. You look around and it's like, 'wow'! I'm pretty bad at following other artists though, I do bury my head in the sand a bit. I should probably look more into up and coming artists and trends.

That said, I like a lot of 'Agerson', 'Roman', more towards the organic 'R n Cain' style. Their style is more appealing to me more than the space age mechanical, though I do appreciate that as an art form as well. Marty Cowl is another good lad, he's really good for his age and does some lovely pieces.

**DO YOU THINK IT'S EASIER
TO GET INFORMATION FROM
OTHER ARTISTS THESE DAYS? IT
USED TO BE A CLOSED SHOP.**

Openness is exactly what the industry needs. Today, there are

so many artists out there who are prepared to help each other. A few years ago they wouldn't tell you what needle or ink they used for instance.





That's another thing about Martin I mean, the guy had only known me five minutes and was showing me his techniques and saying 'Why don't you try this?', or 'I like doing this, I like doing that', which was great for me.

Years ago, everyone was out for themselves and they didn't want anyone in on their territory. But now, there's so much competition that people have got to be as good as they can be.

IF SOMEONE CAME IN HERE AND SAID, 'I WANT A TATTOO', WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO CREATE?

Something mad; organic stuff, something that's unusual. People often

come in and say 'I want something different' but then they follow that with 'I want a flaming angel' and you end up doing a design that you've done before. I want someone to come in and say 'I want something different' and truly mean it. It is almost getting to the stage where you can't do something completely different though: tattooing has been around so long and so much has been done. Still, I do like the bio-mechanical stuff that is coming through again.

DO YOU ENJOY THE TATTOO SHOWS AND CONVENTIONS?

I've been to a lot and, to be honest,

I WANT SOMEONE TO COME IN AND SAY 'I WANT SOMETHING DIFFERENT' AND TRULY MEAN IT.

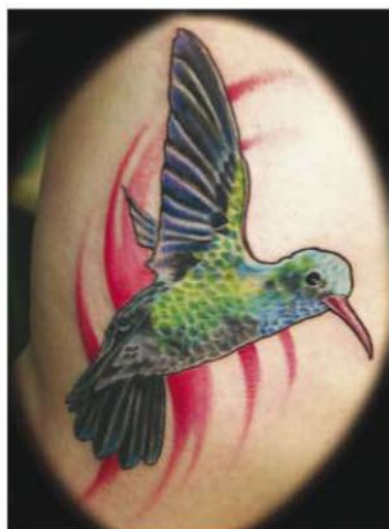
they're grating on me a bit now. I don't know if that's because I've done so many in such a short space of time, or if having a young family makes it more difficult to be away from home. I think I'm going to wind down next year, concentrate on other things like the studio and my family. Some tinkering as well, maybe.

TINKERING? WOULD YOU GET INTO THE TECHNICAL SIDE OF THINGS A BIT MORE THEN?

I'd like to. I've always been one for getting my hands dirty. I was into bricklaying when I was at school and I've always liked building and tinkering with things, so I'd like to try to get into the machine side of things. Just for me really, not for the business just yet - maybe it'll turn into that eventually. And if it takes off, so much the better.

IT'S NICE TO BE ABLE TO DO SOMETHING CREATIVE, OTHER THAN JUST TATTOOING.

I wouldn't say that I don't enjoy tattooing anymore, because I do. It's just that as you get older, you start to look for those kicks in other things as well. Every tattooist needs a machine and it's good knowledge to have. ☺





top people to be around too. I do a guest spot now and again. 'Fleckies' is an awesome place to work.

Carl, 'Cain', and Jeff are the funniest people to work with. Often, I'm laughing that much, I just can't tattoo. It's nice to expand and work at different places occasionally. It can help you keep a lot of skills that are easy to lose. To be a good tattooist, you've got to do everything all the time and not get stuck in a rut. Basically, it's good to get a kick up the arse sometimes! ★



HAVING MY OWN STUDIO HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN AMBITION EVER SINCE I STARTED TATTOOING. I'D LIKE TO SEE MYSELF DOING MY OWN THING. BUT WHO KNOWS REALLY HOW THINGS WILL PAN OUT.

WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN ABOUT FIVE YEARS TIME?

Probably still tattooing as much as I can. I'd like to split things up a little bit though, to see if the machine thing takes off.

DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN YOUR OWN STUDIO?

I'll be honest, I'd really like to. Paul's a top guy, he knows the score...I've been here for three years and I've got no plans just yet. Having my own studio has always been an ambition ever since I started tattooing. I'd like to see myself doing my own thing. But who knows really how things will pan out.

WHO WOULD YOU LIKE TO THANK FOR HELPING YOU OVER THE YEARS?

There's an endless list! Right back at the beginning when I started, you've got Simon Caves, Ashley Gibson and Chris Marsden, they're the guys that really helped me get things off the ground and gave me a shove in the right direction. Then, everyone at Indigo, Paul and Lisa, they've helped a lot. The 'Fleckies' lads are





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TEXT: SION SMITH & PAULA HARDY RANGELÓS
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TATTOO JAM 2010

The biggest event in our tattooing calendar came at us like a herd of rampaging bison. The 2010 Jam was everything we expected it to be and so much more...

"Welcome to the madness!"

There are many ways to kick off the biggest weekend in our year and I almost made it to the cab share that Roman Abrego jumped into that was headed for the Racecourse. Almost being the key word as he was just a little bit too fast for me and those Doncaster cab drivers certainly know a good thing when they see it. Money was changing hands in the taxi rank faster than a weekend in Vegas at the poker tables.

As luck would have it, later on that very same day, Roman being the

rather splendid gentleman that he is gave up big chunk of his time to make up for it and sat down to talk to us pretty extensively about his life, the universe and everything else.

In my book, that's how you start your run at a convention though to be perfectly frank, the time I spent at the train station waiting for the next cab to show up was just about all the downtime I had for the whole weekend. As soon as I was acquainted myself with this seriously excellent venue (they must have spent millions on it and it shows), it was off with a camera crew, a photographer, a

Dictaphone and a bag of sharp wits to shanghai as many artists as possible to take part in our video interviews, rustle up future features for the magazine and soak up the atmosphere.

With Paul Booth still being one of the biggest draws at this – or any other – convention, it was good to meet up with him again. He ➔





doesn't change much – but he does get better and better in his domain and puts so much back into the industry that the public never sees, that he probably deserves an award of some description – that would be apart from all the ones he has already. Ten years ago, he was the first tattoo artist I ever interviewed. In that conversation, I learned more about the art and the industry than I have in any other conversation since... and for that I feel justified in paying him this lip service.

Not to be outdone (not that it was a competition), Brandon Bond made his presence well felt. This was definitely his year. More people asked me where they could find him than anybody else and with good reason. One look at his current portfolio show why his name is at the forefront of pop culture when

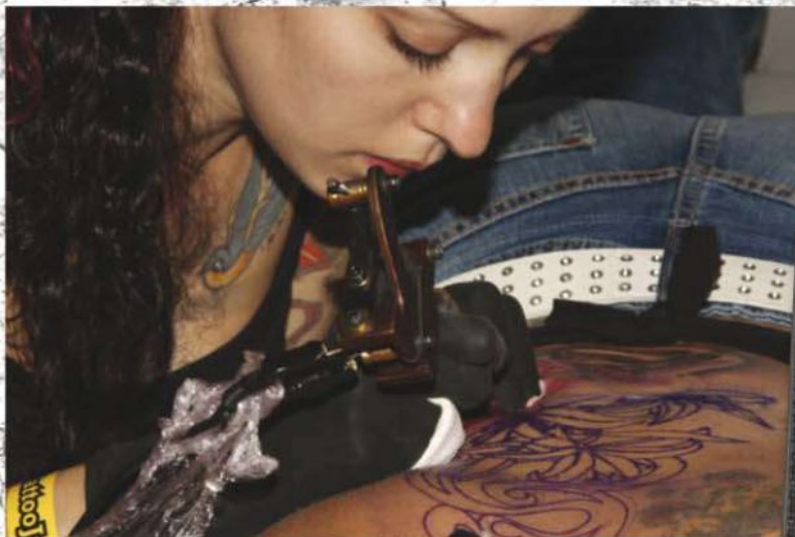


it comes to the ink world. Sadly, as you can imagine, I never got even five minutes to sit down with him. That is one seriously in demand guy – and it's well deserved. He's what my old man would call a worker! If Bond believes in something, the whole world will get to know about it!

...and then a strange and very unexpected thing happened. I was downloading some files for the bossman when Jodie Marsh showed

up – and I need to say this next bit out loud: I had preconceived notions about her, you can't help it with people in the public eye for apparently very little reason but she turned me around. Jodie gets a hard time in the press but I tell you what, she works hard at what she does – really hard. She was very nice to all of the people who work for Skin Deep and I found her to be a genuinely nice person. She had turned up to shoot a segment of a

Brandon Bond made his presence well felt this year. More people asked where they could find him than anybody else and with good reason.





TRACT WILSON BY AMANDA RUBY AT SOUND INK

ROSS MACKENZIE BY TINY MISS BECCA

WINNER KAI BY JULIE CLARKE



JEANANN JONES BY COLIN JONES AT STAINED CLASS



JAKE TAYLOR BY RICH WARHURTON AT STAINED CLASS

documentary she was making for TV but didn't act like a prima donna and was very respectful of the artists at work. It's always nice to be surprised.

Anyway, after she had finished talking the hind legs off this donkey, I finally tracked down Megan Massacre at Deep Six who was busy battling the demon that gets to everybody at some time – the travel adaptor plug - and handed over a fistful of her cover shoot copies of Skin Shots. Delightful and committed are a couple of great words to use to describe her. Show me somebody that doesn't love what she does and I'll show you a person who's tired of life.

Is that enough of Artist Friday? No? Want some more? I must have gone back to Tanane Whitfield's booth six or seven times only to find him – every single time – busy with the needles. That man never stops but I'll get him in the end. His name is in the front of the book as somebody I'm expecting great things from in the coming year. No pressure then...

No review of the show would be justified without saying a huge thank you to all of the traders manning their stalls this year. You could barely go ten paces without digging your hand into your pocket – there's some seriously

good merch out there at the moment.

But all good Artist Friday's must come to an end – only this one never seemed to! That very same evening, the Tattoo Masters Ball started off innocuously enough with gentle chat but soon descended into the wanton banshee wailing of the Skin Deep Sirens hogging the karaoke stage – they weren't the only ones either. Is nothing sacred anymore? And you know, I like Journey, but I swear if I hear that damn song one more time...

Thence came the award ceremony – nervous? Me? Having been in the job all of seven hours? Bring it on. I'll let everybody else be the judge of that but awards needed to be handed out and awards were – there was a great selection of winners this year and all more than justified. Somebody who was paying attention at the time will have recorded this for posterity and provided all the information in a nice box somewhere in this supplement. Me? I was too preoccupied with the 9000 watt bulbs bearing down on me

to be writing.

But with the "official" (I use the term loosely) part over, the Ball got into swing mode within seconds. A big thank you to everybody who came over to say hi and talk about the magazine with me – it's always nice to be welcomed, though I must have missed a very important meeting about the evening as I did wonder why I was the only person there not dressed as a cowboy...

Still with a long list of people to talk to, the weekend proper began very early. It's only a short walk from the hotel to the venue but what where all these people doing queuing up at



I must have returned to Tanane Whitfield's booth six or seven times only to find him - every single time - busy with the needles. The man never stops...



TATTOO JAM '10 COMPETITION WINNERS

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BEST TRIBAL/CELTIC
KAI BY JULIE CLARKE, FLAMING GUN

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DICKIE BY ARRAN BURTON, COSMIC TATTOO

BEST OF SATURDAY
JOEY BY LEIGH OLDCORN, COSMIC TATTOO

BEST OF SUNDAY
SAM SORCI BY TANANE WHITFIELD, FUZION INK

BEST OF CONVENTION
RENA BY GEORGE MAVRIDIS, TATTOOLIGANS

As the morning wore on, the crowd outside just got bigger and bigger. And then bigger again. I've seen some long lines in my time, but this came under the heading of serious.

9.30 in the morning? And as the morning wore on, the crowd outside just got bigger and bigger. And then bigger again. I've seen some long lines in my time, but this came under the heading of serious.

Once everybody was in, the Big Game began - the reason everybody came, and boy did they come from all corners of the globe to get some art from some of the best names in the business. It was a sight to behold watching people in line waiting for artists who have studios in the UK as well. It's very easy to forget with an international festival and big names being bandied about that the majority of artists are UK based and have come to work - and work hard. To those of

you who are the backbone of this convention, we salute each of you! The temptation and tendency is always to concentrate on the big names but there are many worthy of accolades working the UK as well.

With very little time to say hello to everybody, we can hopefully rectify that at future events, but meantime I was introduced to a very unassuming couple who caused my eyes to go very wide with the quality of their work. That would be Volko and Simone at Buena Vista Tattoo Club - the results of our liaison can be found in this month's magazine, so I don't need to say anything further. Apart from "thanks" and "wow" maybe. ★

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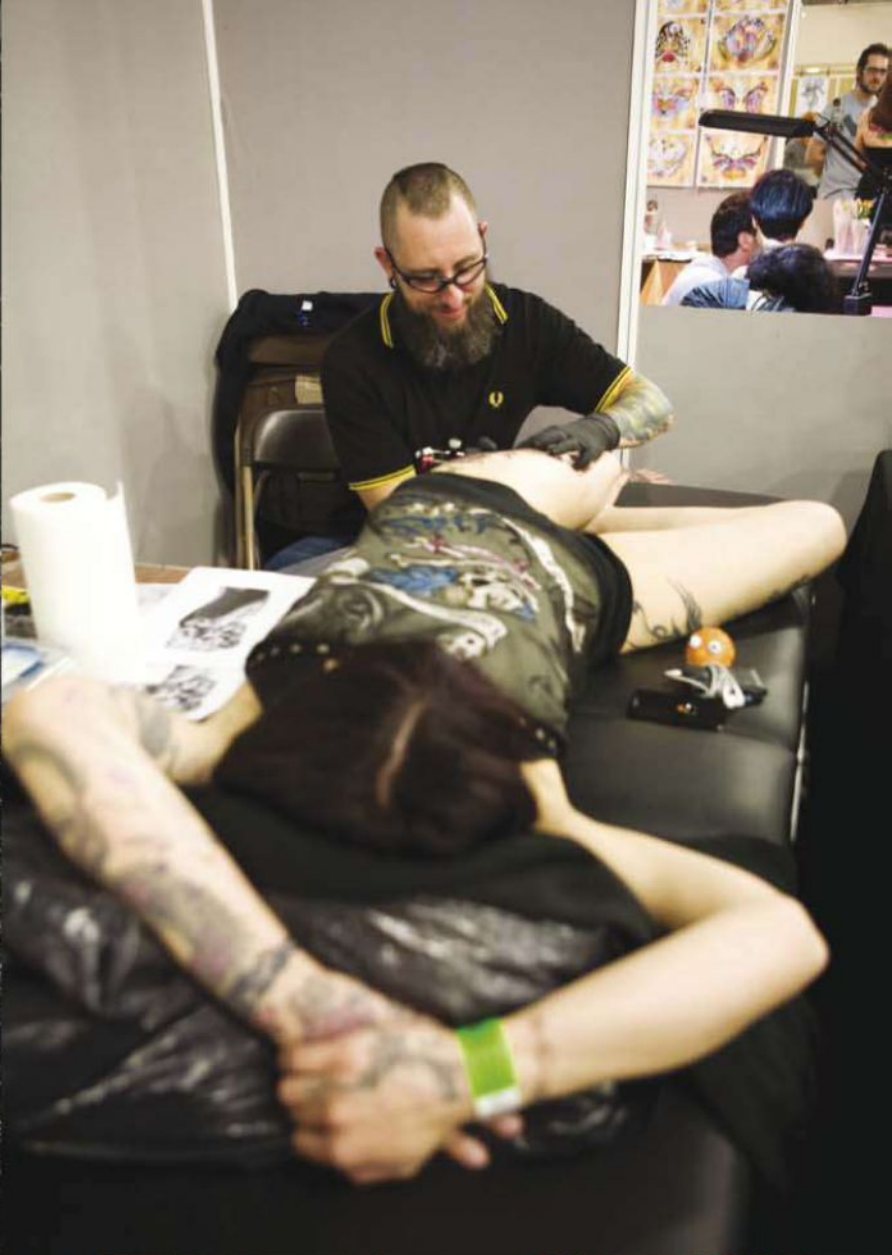
Tattoo Jam 2010 and the Renaissance of Tattooing.

Tocal conventions, national conventions, international conventions, big conventions, small conventions, one day events, three day events... UK tattoo fans have a lot to choose from these days and a special art form deserves a special event.

Tattoos are an extraordinary kind of art, a pure art. Tattoos cannot pass from hand to hand, cannot be sold on or auctioned, there is no secondary market, but there is an industry around them, magazines that document the community, conventions, prints, books and T-shirts.

This special art form is related to the traditions of fine art, design and craft and despite developing separately, patterns and similarities can be identified. During the renaissance period, painters and sculptors sought to elevate their status beyond that of skilled replicators and thus elevate art itself, separating art from craft and bringing about a new understanding, a rebirth. Tattooing frequently enters renaissance periods,

Tattoos are an extraordinary kind of art, a pure art. Tattoos cannot pass from hand to hand, cannot be sold on or auctioned, there is no secondary market, but there is an industry around them



PATRICK BY BILLY THE BASTARD AT CUSTOM INC. GLASGOW

DEAN WISEMAN BY PHIL BUTTERWORTH AT ARCTIC

not least now.

Contemporary tattoos can be divided into three distinct groups, the Traditional (encompassing Japanese, Old School and Neo Traditional, featuring distinct outlines, dark shade and solid colours,

utilising or disregarding traditional tattoo iconography) Black Work (Tribal, Eastern or Geometric patterns, using lines and dots) and Realism (black and grey or full colour depictions of real subjects, such as wildlife or portraits).

Some tattooers are well versed in all styles, and some choose to



specialise - collectors and enthusiasts do the same. Those that adorn their bodies may select one style, whether that is for a whole body suit or more strategically placed pieces. Others may decide to not decide and have wide variety of emblems and styles.

Tattoo conventions proliferate; it is a packed event calendar and at some points during the year there are competing conventions on the same weekend. For conventions to be relevant to the art form they seek to promote, they must look to tattoos for their ethos and inspiration and must reflect the specialisms of tattooing in its contemporary form. Tattoo Jam does this by focussing on tattooers working in Realism, attracting some of the best artists in their field and building the event around them. That is not to say that fans of other styles will be disappointed, there is a little something for everyone here.

Tattoo Jam's strength lies in its ability to attract the brightest and best, not just from the UK, but also from much further afield and brings them together in the not very glamorous or interesting city of Doncaster.

Doncaster is a city not known for its cultural heritage, but Tattoo Jam could be staged in any location. The convention alone is the attraction and there is little need to leave the racecourse. A large venue, ranging over several floors and providing designated spaces

Tattoo Jam's strength lies in its ability to attract the brightest and best, not just from the UK, but also from much further afield and brings them together in the not very glamorous or interesting city of Doncaster.

for the bar and the cafeteria (the food is much better than is usual at large events). And also for the art gallery and some excitingly rare exhibits from the tattoomuseum.org, a private collection featuring painted circus banners, early flash and antique tattoo machines.

The upstairs tattoo space, although out of the way, is fortunate to be bathed in wonderful natural light and making it a pleasant space to watch Xed L Head and friends from his new Divine Canvas shop laboriously

JOEY BY LEIGH OLDCORN AT COSMIC TATTOO, UK



ARTIST FRIDAY THE SEMINARS

BRANDON BOND, DAVE TEDDER & TONY MANCIA
ALL OR NOTHING SEMINAR

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DRAWING THE DRAGON

DARRIN WHITE
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JOHN MONTGOMERY
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LAUREN DOWLING BY IAIN CLARK AT AURORA



DICKIE SMITH BY ARIAN BURTON AT COSMIC TATTOO

craft some of the most beautiful black work tattoos in the world, both by machine and by hand. This airy space was also a temporary home to the staff of *Tattooligans*, Greece. George Mavridis' expert blend of Realism and Traditional resulted in the well-deserved title of Best Tattoo of the Convention, the most impressive of all of the category winners.

Tattoo Jam is a convention that remains focussed on tattooing and tattoo art and does not get distracted by additional cultural phenomenon, there are no skateboard ramps or burlesque dancers here, just lots of (almost 300) working tattooists, some relevant art and a few bands.

Of course, this means that the calibre of the artists really must stand up to scrutiny and happily the convention is mostly successful in this endeavour.

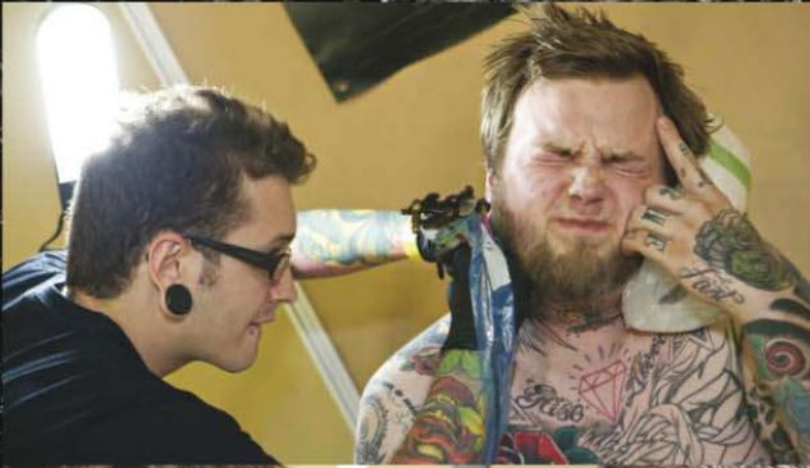
Tattoo artist highlights included Tanane Whitfield, who travelled all

the way from Virginia Beach to make witty, high colour tattoos, almost direct opposites of the dark, demonic imagery tattooed on the other side of the room by another US artist, Paul Booth.

Although the artists at Tattoo Jam are predominantly Realism specialists, the tattooers representing the Traditional style were far from disappointing - Tutti Serra, Drew Romero, Scarlet Hel, Simon Erl, all young up and comers bringing their own slants to Traditional Western styles and imagery. Others working the show



Tattoo Jam offers a opportunity to view contemporary tattooing in its current renaissance period, a chance to see tattoo artists taking the traditional craft forward and continually elevating the status of tattooing to where it belongs, that of an art.



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The artists at Tattoo Jam 2010 broke the world record for the most people being tattooed simultaneously under the same roof with 223! Previously, the record was held by the 2009 London Convention – and stood at 178.

included Lionel Fahy, a man whose witty, conceptually fractured tattoos deserve a category all of their own. Tattoo Jam also welcomed British Tattoo Royalty, Lal Hardy and Louis Molloy.

Well organised and stage-managed, the convention managed the miracle of on-time concise, judging. Tattoo Jam gets it right where other conventions fail with an interesting and relevant host (comedian Jim Smallman) who entered his latest tattoo into the Best of Sunday competition, a category that was fiercely contested, reflecting the high standard of work produced at the show. Leigh Oldcorn's Del Boy portrait, winner of Best of Saturday is indicative of the quality.

The convention art gallery was a smorgasbord of visual stimulation

provided collaboratively by Big Tattoo Planet.com and 2021 Visual Arts Centre. Artworks on display were executed in a variety of mediums by tattooers such as Angelique Houtkamp, Alex Binnie and Louis Molloy and artists working with tattoo imagery such as Sin Eater Illustration and Cat Scott.

Tattoo Jam offers a opportunity to view contemporary tattooing in its current renaissance period, a chance to see tattoo artists taking the traditional craft forward and continually elevating the status of tattooing to where it belongs, that of an art. Not many conventions can claim that, but one weekend in Doncaster, certainly can.★





SKINPIX

Here are a few of our favourite pieces
of work from Tattoo Jam 2010...

6-8 AUGUST 2010



SIMON BY DAWNI AT PAINTED LADY



SAM - CHANTALE AT TIMELESS INK



JOSH PEACOCK BY DAVEEE AT KULT TATTOO, POLAND



RICHARD JONES BY COLIN JONES AT STAINED GLASS



JAMES BY JON AT NARCISSIM



MARTIN DEAN BY WAYNE AT ASH TATTOO



JEFF GRIMMET BY THOMAS KYNST



ELLIA BY INDEPENDENT EMBROIDER



MARK BY MARCIN AT INDEPENDENT



ROB HAYCLIFFE @ BORDER ROSE



DAN YOUNG BY YANG ZHOU AT YZ TATTOO, CHINA



SKETCH BY PERO AT LUCKY 7, OSLO, NORWAY



EMILY BY EDGAR IVANOV AT OLD LONDON ROAD TATTOO, KINGSTON



WEN LEE BY PADZ AT LUCKY 13, BARNESLEY



PHIL WOOD BY JON B AT NARCISISM





LOUISA BY MIRAK STOTTER



IAN EISENBERG BY EMMA KIERZEK AT AURORA



ANGIE BY STUART ROLLISON AT KING ARTHURS



CARL COOKE BY NICK WHITBROWE AT SELF SACRIFICE, UK



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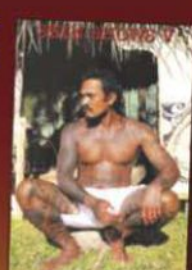
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**SLAVE TO
THE NEEDLE**

AARON BELL

After two years as an apprentice at 65th Street Tattoo in Seattle, Aaron Bell was surprisingly left a studio for next to nothing. He renamed it Slave to the Needle and 15 years later it's still at the same address in a neighbourhood that's gone from bad to good.

Slave to the Needle

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USA
+1 206 789 2618
www.slavetotheneedle.com

After a decade of tattooing out of his house in Anaheim, California, Aaron Bell got a chance to tattoo for real, at 65th Street Tattoo in Seattle, Washington, and he took it. In 1993 he moved north to 'clean up his act', as he puts it himself. Unfortunately he ended up working in what then was one of the worst neighbourhoods in Seattle.

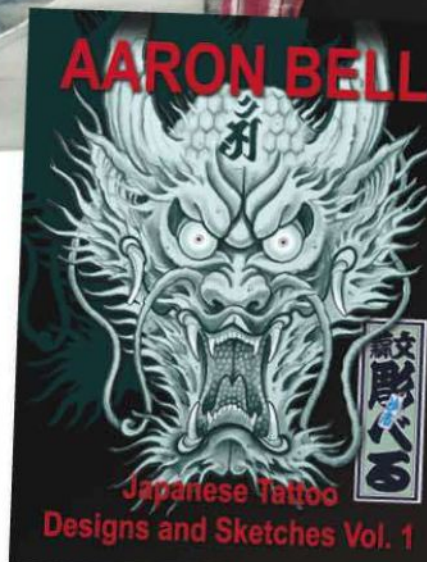
"When I first got there we were always strapped and it was consistent with the lifestyle I grew up with. Every time a bike drove by, the owner would grab his shot gun and stand in the doorway to see who it was. There were people selling crack outside the bars and we had a couple of drive-bys. Since we also had the AA there, we used to joke about this being the only

place where you could get drunk, shoot someone and then turn yourself around. But I put up with it because I got a chance to tattoo."

Just two years later Aaron took over the shop.

"My boss got transferred to a different chapter of his bike club, so he sold it to me for next to nothing, and I changed the name to Slave to the Needle."

Today everything's different. The studio is still in the same spot, but around the same time that Aaron





AARON CONSIDERS HIMSELF LUCKY TO HAVE EXPERIENCED ALL THIS, BECAUSE IN THE PROCESS HE'S LEARNED SOME VALUABLE LESSONS.

took over the shop, the area was in transition. That transformation is now complete and instead the area is considered trendy.

"The yuppies started moving in, which isn't necessarily a good thing. The clientele used to be really seedy but it was also a lot of fun. I've got to admit that. The bars became microbreweries

and the shop 65th Street Guns is now an espresso stand. Business couldn't be better, but again, it's not quite as fun."

And in a way, Aaron considers himself lucky to have experienced all this, because in the process he's learned some valuable lessons.

"The guy who taught me had learned how to tattoo in San Quentin and the



way I was exposed to it, I learned some important work ethics a lot of people don't know about. For instance, you don't automatically tattoo what people want because they might not know what it means."

Aaron Bell started tattooing out of his house in Anaheim in 1984, where he grew up in the punk rock scene. For 15 years he played rhythm guitar in bands like Convicted and Blind Hatred and he came close to releasing an album, but after a while tattooing took over.

"We actually recorded an album, but it was never released. Then my wife got pregnant and I bought the shop, so I had to choose my creative outlet."

In the end, Aaron never got to tour with a band, however, in tattooing he found something he was looking for as a band member.

"I got to go to conventions and there are people who come from far away just to get tattooed by me and see my art, so

**DON'T AUTOMATICALLY
TATTOO WHAT PEOPLE WANT
BECAUSE THEY MIGHT NOT
KNOW WHAT IT MEANS.**





I DID A LOT OF ATROCIOUS STUFF WHILE EXPERIMENTING, ALTHOUGH STAYING IN ONE PLACE ALLOWED ME TO FOLLOW UP MY WORK.

I get that same appreciation I wanted being in a band."

Besides tattooing and playing punk rock he also had some loose jobs on the way, and one of them actually brought him to Seattle.

"I did some screen printing out of my garage, so I was designing and printing some t-shirts for the owner of the studio in Seattle."

When Aaron first started off, his style of tattooing came from the punk rock scene. In other words, he did a lot of skulls. After having moved to Seattle,

the bike world came in as an influence. When he bought the shop he was suddenly left on his own to explore his own style.

"I had no teacher anymore and new school was coming out so I jumped on that. I did a lot of atrocious stuff while experimenting, although staying in one place allowed me to follow up my work. Around 2000 I found myself more drawn to the oriental style, and that's mainly what I do today. I like to work in large scale and I like the fact that it has hundreds of years of history." ➡





WE USED TO TURN PEOPLE AWAY AT THE DOOR AND REFER THEM TO OTHER SHOPS, SO I THOUGHT WHY NOT JUST REFER THEM TO OURSELVES INSTEAD?

Ten years after having purchased the first shop Aaron got the opportunity to buy a second one in Seattle, and so he did.

"We used to turn people away at the door and refer them to other shops, so I thought why not just refer them to ourselves instead?"

Suddenly he was a work leader governing two Seattle shops featuring 15 artists:

"When I bought the shop I had only been tattooing for real for a couple of years and coming out of the hardcore scene it was a complex situation. There we solved stuff by fighting, but now we had to work things out. In the beginning I held in a lot. There was a lot of anxiety. But now I know that communication is important."

Aaron has also learned a screening process when it comes to hiring artists for his studios.

"I used to hire them only based on their work. I wouldn't check references. There are a lot of prima donnas out there and if they don't leave the last place with a blessing, there's a big chance they will recreate their past. Nowadays we have people doing guest spots first to make sure it works for both sides."★



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THE SECRET OF...

Questions, questions, questions... We've all got them but they're no good rattling around in your head. We wondered what might happen if we asked one of them out loud - and got some killer answers.

A Great Cover Up

Before



After



ERIC DIAZ
13TH AVE TATTOOS
SAN ANTONIO, USA

"I think most any undesirable tattoo can be covered up, as long as the new tattoo has enough going on to distract your eye from the old one."

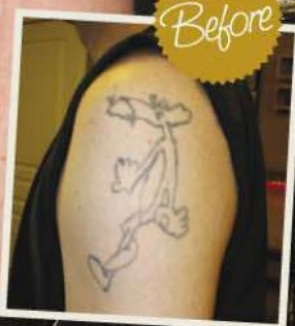
BETTY B
BOWEN ISLAND BC, CANADA

"I believe the secret to a great cover-up is to be sure the new design complements the shape and contours of the body. But it is equally important to be sure the new design has a lot going on where it covers the old one to prevent an obvious bleed through"

After



Before



→

"Don't try to cover, try to disguise. When people focus on covering, it almost always looks like a cover up. Draw the eye to another area and it will create a good tattoo."

CHRIS
NAKED ART TATTOO
MARYLAND, USA



SEAN HENRY
FRONTLINE TATTOO
SURFERS PARADISE, AUSTRALIA

↑

"Know what you're doing before attempting a cover-up, don't go in half cocked. The worst thing in the world is covering a cover-up! Plan it, and expect it to be at least double the original tattoo size. A true successful cover is not knowing there was ever a tattoo under your cover-up."

AMANDA SISSONS
RENAISSANCE,
RICKMANSWORTH



"Try to move the focal point away from what you're trying to cover up. The eye will always look to a human face first if there is one available, which is exactly what happens in this example"



A Great Cover-Up

"I feel it's important to apply a larger tattoo for a cover-up, so there's plenty of camouflage without having to end up with an obvious little mass of black ink. Some people don't want to go with a bigger image, and that can make it easier to spot as a cover up in the first place."

STEPHANIE PURNELL
ELECTRIC CHAIR TATTOO
TEXAS, USA

After



After



ARIES RHYISING
TALISMAN TATTOO
NEW MEXICO

Before



"A well done cover-up should not look like a cover-up. If the old tattoo can be seen, the job is not done correctly."

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A Great Cover Up

DAVE
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STOCKPORT

SKIN DEEP SAYS...
"Possibly the most extreme
cover-up we've ever seen!
Good work Dave!"

After



Before



"A cover up should be like an invisible mend - it shouldn't look like a cover up at all! Cover ups are a real challenge that need to be really well conceived and executed - they're hard to do well!"

WHITE TRASH MATT
LOW TIDE TATTOO GALLERY
MARYLAND

After



"When doing a cover up, textures help out a lot. They distract the eyes from what's underneath."

Before



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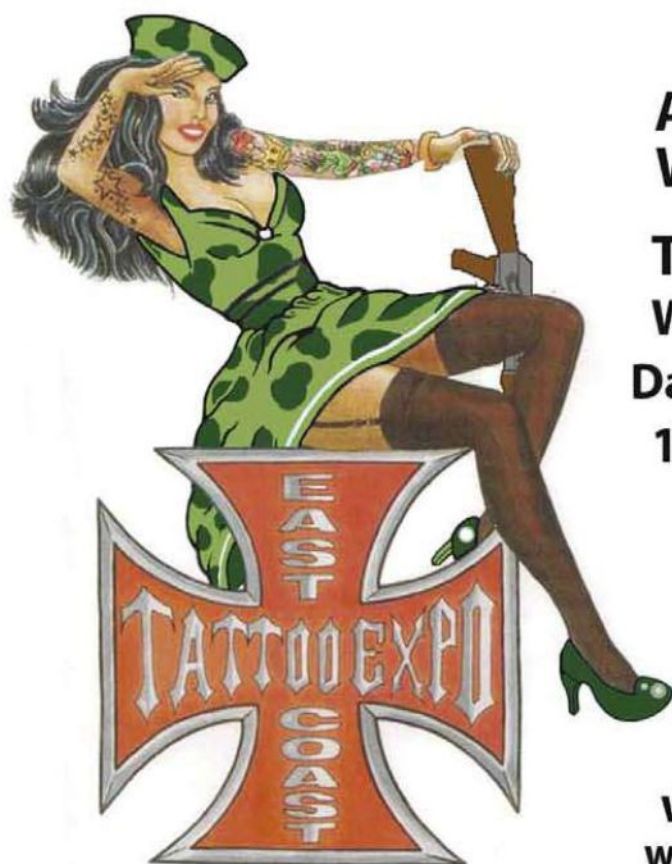
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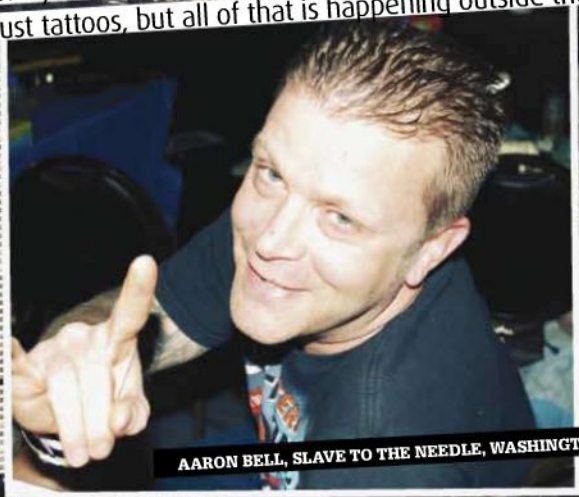
NEW YORK

TEXT AND PHOTOS SIMON LUNDH

STATE OF MIND

THE NEW YORK CITY CONVENTION

The New York City convention got started the year after the ban against tattooing in New York was lifted. Twelve years later it's still held in the Roseland Ballroom, a couple of busy, bustling blocks away from Times Square. This is a convention that offers more than just tattoos, but all of that is happening outside the doors.



AARON BELL, SLAVE TO THE NEEDLE, WASHINGTON, USA

JIMBO @ LARK TATTOO, NEW YORK, USA



LUCY @ MY TATTOO, CALIFORNIA, USA



CALAT SELLERS



BRUCE KAPLAN, LARK TATTOO, NEW YORK, USA



SHAWN T. DOPPEL, DA VINCI TATTOO, NEW YORK, USA



TOM @ TATTOO EVOLUTION, WASHINGTON, USA



1997 was an important year for tattoo enthusiasts and artists in New York. That was the year when tattooing became legal in the city again. Before that people had to go to, for example, New Jersey to adorn their skin with ink based art.

The year after that, the first New York City convention was held.

"There was a great need for a convention in New York at the time and it was started by Steve Bonge, Butch Garcia and Wes Wood. They were the owners and I was kind of the fourth person helping out," says Clayton Patterson, now the only one left alongside Steve Bonge.

From the start the convention has been held in the historical building that is Roseland Ballroom, located on 52 Street, just a stone's throw away from busy Times Square, the heart of New York City.

"Steve wanted a great historical building, a landmark with class, and he was able to hook up Roseland. It's

It's a cultural centre where a lot of great bands have played and of course it used to be a ballroom. It's a great place to have the convention.



DAVE POOLE, ROCK-A-BILLY TATTOO, WITH HIS FRIENDS AND CUSTOMERS FRANK DELGADO AND ABE CUNNINGHAM IN DEFTONES

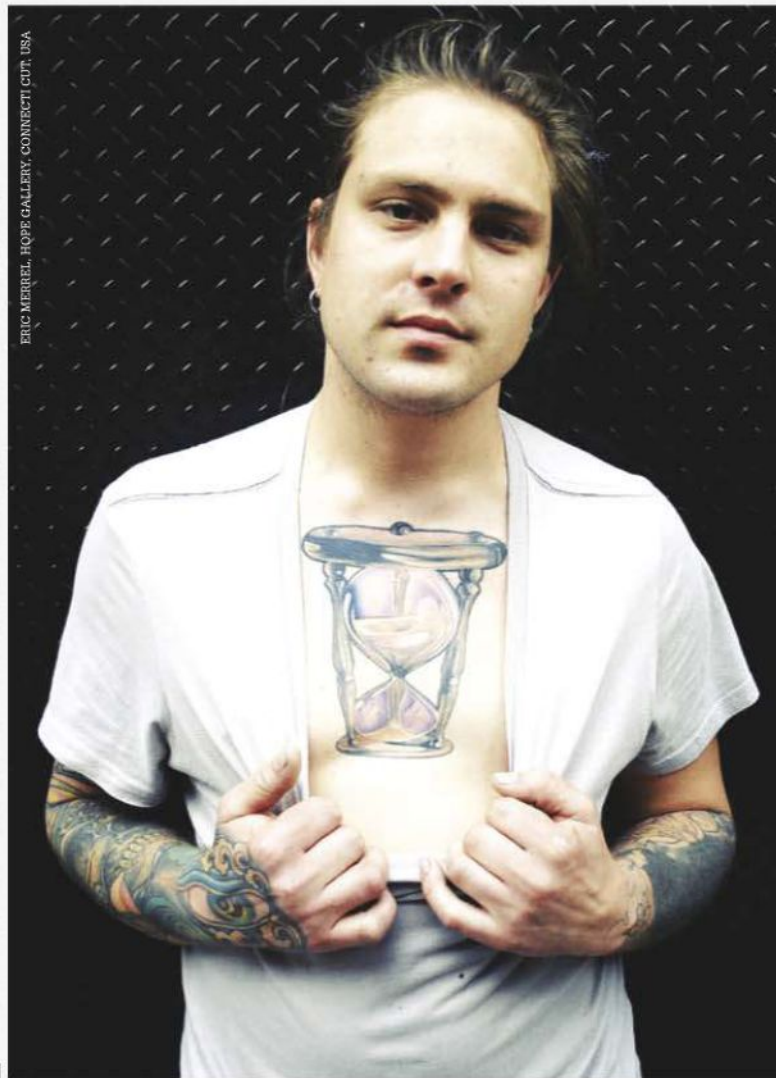


PAULA DORAN AND PAUL BOOTH, LAST RITES TATTOO, USA

It's a cultural center where a lot of great bands have played and of course it used to be a ballroom. It's a great place to have the convention.

a cultural center where a lot of great bands have played and of course it used to be a ballroom. It's a great place to have the convention. Also, in this area, the convention is a reasonably priced entertainment. For 20 dollars you get a full day's experience. If you go to a movie and buy some popcorn, that's 20 dollars right there. We also have good food at good prices."

One thing that strikes me during the weekend, though, is the almost complete lack of entertainment in



ERIC MERREL, HOPE GALLERY, CONNECTICUT, USA



BRUCE KAPLAN, LARK TATTOO, NEW YORK, USA



JOHN SWEENEY, HARD KNOX TATTOO, NEW YORK, USA



STEVE FUN CITY TATTOO, NEW YORK, USA



So about that ban...

Back in 1961, tattooing in New York City was forced underground when the City Health Department figured it had found a series of hepatitis cases coming from studios.

It wasn't until 1985 - 24 years later, but still 12 years before it would be legal again in 1997 - that the New York Tattoo Society came together. The society went on to form the basis of the group that would bring about the change that was needed - and these were people who really wanted change, but it took until 1996 for their efforts to truly come together.

To begin with, the city wanted to introduce totally unworkable regulations that included \$5000 licensing fees, having their say on what kind of lights were used and even down so far as to what studios were allowed to use to decorate with.

Eventually, sanity prevailed and a set of regulations that would work for both artists and the city came about - these included a \$100 dollar licence fee and a health department examination. Conversely, artists found operating illegally, could face serious fines.

Which brings us to today where we find NYC to be a city bustling with activity some of the most famous names in the world...

addition to the actual convention. In conventions all over the world you get to see bands, burlesque shows and circus sideshows. But not here. Again it has to do with the location:

"This is not an art show or anything like that, it's a tattoo show. If you have bands playing it's loud and hard for the tattooists to talk to the customers and it takes over. All the focus is on the band."

Instead the bustling activity of the Times Square area is one of the main features of the convention in itself, according to Patterson:

"This is Midtown Manhattan. If you want to do something else for a while you can just walk out the door and go to David Letterman or a Broadway show or whatever. You can be entertained all the way from here to the first corner. Yesterday there was a block party right across the street, so why should we have Paul Booth doing art fusion downstairs?"

Aaron Bell, from Slave to the Needle, in Seattle, Washington, confirms Patterson's theories.

"This is my seventh year here and always I bring the family. Since we're in Times Square there's a lot to do of everything. There's generally not a lot of culture in the States, so if you want to grasp a little of it, this would be the place."

Friday is quite slow and as I walk around I can't say that I'm very impressed by the artwork covering the skin of the visitors. To me a lot of it seems like European work, but sloppy.

Come Saturday though, that all changes. It's by far the busiest day of the three. The quality of the tattoos actually being produced at the convention throughout the weekend is as good as any I've been to, but on Saturday the artwork on the visitors' arms and legs also seem to have increased a lot. ➡

Since we're in Times Square there's a lot to do of everything. There's generally not a lot of culture in the States, so if you want to grasp a little of it, this would be the place.



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A SHIRTLESS VISITOR HAILING A CAB

Saturday is also the day when a lot of people go up to Paul Booth's famous studio Last Rites after the convention closes, to view a gallery opening.

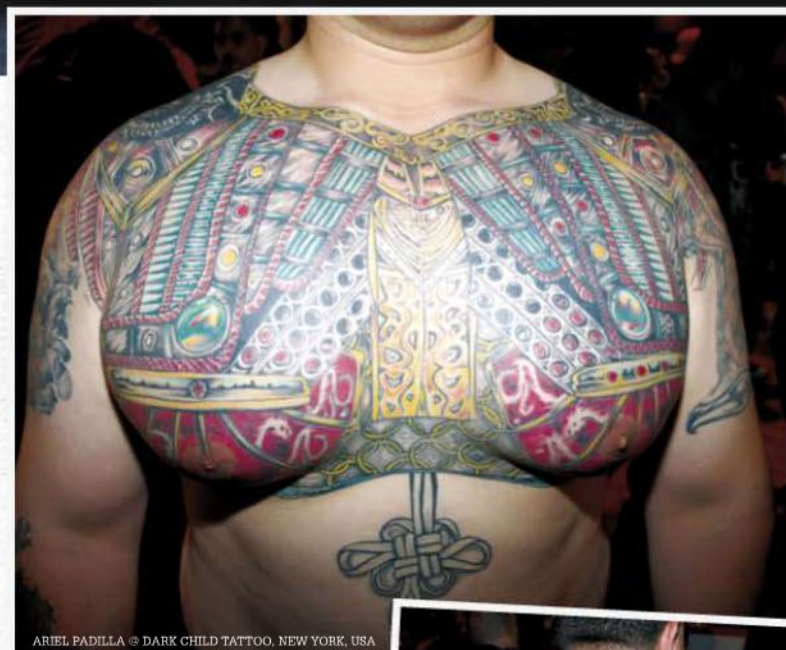
On Friday, Ish, from Tattooish in Netherlands Antilles, walked away with the Best of Day trophy. On Saturday Placaso, from California, wins his first of two.

Saturday is also the day when a lot of people go up to Paul Booth's famous studio Last Rites after the convention closes, to view a gallery opening featuring macabre art made foremost by tattoo artists.

Paul Booth and Aaron Bell are both part of what Clayton Patterson thinks of as almost an international family

gathering. A lot of the artists have been working the convention from the beginning and one of those is Frank from The Spirit of Art Tattoo in Bremen, Germany. He's been coming to New York since year one.

"The first year the ban had just been lifted and Frank Sinatra was dying so they were playing New York, New York the whole time, and we were all



ARIEL PADILLA © DARK CHILD TATTOO, NEW YORK, USA

like a big family. We, who came from Europe, were also much respected. At a restaurant we even ended up in a picture in a news paper."

Since then he's seen a change in the attitude in people in New York and at the convention. It has, of course, to do with another important date in American, and world, history, September 11, 2001.

"The city changed and it's not so much of a rock'n'roll city as it used to be. People are not so open-minded and happy anymore. They're still a bit scared."

He actually became a victim of this scare himself once, when he missed his only New York show so far:

"I was talking to this Pakistani business man in customs. I said some bad things about George W. Bush,



which they heard, and they sent me home. I had to do two interviews at the embassy in Germany to be allowed back in the country."

Although, when it comes to the actual art of tattooing, he instead finds Americans a bit more open-minded than Europeans.

"In Europe you got to have this or that, but here you can change around, mix things up."★



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THE DOCTOR IS IN...



Hollie Bryant

Once in a while, somebody special comes along who fulfils a need on more than one front. Whilst we were whittling down potential cover models for this issue, we also had in the back of our minds something that we hadn't touched on recently that readers quite often mail in about and that was how people with a lot of ink get by in their regular jobs. So when we discovered that Cardiff's Hollie Bryant was a nurse (and not a member of Torchwood), how could we resist!

Cardiff has really turned itself into a fun place to be these days. The last time I came here – quite some time ago – it was a city on its knees begging to be put to sleep. It's hard not to fall in love with the place. The same can be said of Hollie – fiercely proud of her art and more than willing to tell the whole world about it, I don't even have to ask her anything before she gets going...

"I got my first tattoo at 15 whilst truanting from school! A small, poorly designed Celtic piece on my stomach which thankfully, today is almost nowhere to be seen. Four years, three bad tattoos and an awful lot wiser, I set my eyes on the work of Dawnii Fantana (Painted Lady Tattoo Parlour). Her work was so bright, bold and original I was entranced immediately. I knew I wanted work done and it all went from there. Over the next four years Dawnii did my chest piece, side piece, Hawaiian sleeve and many a lower leg piece at various conventions. She's awesome!"

"Later, Phil Kyle at Magnum Opus did my left sleeve including my egg timer and gypsy mirror and the roses. I really admire his work and have a good collection of his paintings over my walls at home. I also have pieces by Jo Harrison and Simon Erl on the same arm – again, both artists whose tattoo and artwork I adore."

"I love old school imagery and try to incorporate those elements into my ideas for ink. I always have the initial ideas but leave it up to the artists to interpret them in their own way and make the tattoo their own. I'm definitely not regimental in any particular style however I do love

colour and all of my ink is pretty bright. Animals also tend to feature a lot in my ink partly because I'm vegan, partly because I'm fascinated with birds. I'm like the crazy bird lady with seven birds scattered around the place!"

I assume you're not quite done yet...

"I've got a lot of work to go yet! I've just had my Vegan tattoo started by Chris Hatton at Physical Graffiti. They are the cutest thigh pieces, that guy is super talented! I can't wait to get them finished. Then I hope to start my back piece next year. I'm traditional Japanese at the moment but who knows what might happen with that - there are so many awesome artists out there! Sometime in the future, I'd like to get work by Buena Vista Tattoo Club, Uncle Allan, Matt Difa and Leah Moule – there's more but those spring to the front of my mind."

For better or worse – depending on which side of the fence you're on – the public profile of tattoo art is possibly the highest it's ever been thanks to the media, does it affect you professionally?

"I'm a nurse – a regular nurse that looks after ill folk. I started getting heavily tattooed whilst in my nurse training. Everyone tends to assume I got all my tattoos before for some reason but most of them came after I qualified. It doesn't make you a shit nurse to be tattooed but there's still an awful lot of misconceptions surrounding tattoos and people definitely tend to perceive you differently. I've learnt that over the last few years. People don't expect to see a heavily tattooed nurse when they walk into a doctor's surgery but I'm doing my best to change views. I'm good at what I do and tattoos don't change that."



So what's the big plan? Are you quite happy being a nurse by day and modelling when you can or are you looking to push the modelling so that you can maybe give up nursing and come back to it later?

I love nursing, it's my bread and butter but I love modelling equally. I think I've managed to find a happy medium to be honest. Nursing is work that I love to bits but modelling is more play and a chance to relax and get creative. I think I've found the right balance that allows me to do both. I'd love to have more time to shoot though. I have a lot I want to achieve in the next year modelling wise and slowly but surely, I'm working my way through a big list. I don't intend on giving up nursing but I definitely intend on pushing the modelling side of things. ➤





I DO LOOK REALLY DIFFERENT. I TRY TO BE VERSATILE AND NOT JUST STICK TO ONE LOOK IN SHOOTS.

There's no set plan, I'm just going with the flow right now."

From all of the things you've said here, it's evident that you're very much in charge of where you're going – does that translate into the kind of shoots you like to do?

"I do like to have a lot to do with the production of the shoots, but the whole team tend to contribute creatively. I like to take an active role in the process but you have to value the photographer's direction and opinion. They've taken a million pictures before and know what looks good and what doesn't. It's really important to find a good team to work with. Experience is a prerequisite but most of all for me, they need to be fun to work with. It's nice to bring your own ideas to the shoot but it's really helpful to take advice. That way you can keep things simple and be yourself."

I confess to Hollie that when the contact sheets landed on my desk, I split her into two different piles. Both made the "extremely possible for the cover" pile but I filed her as two different people and it wasn't until later in the day that I figured out they were both her...

"Charming! I agree though. I do look really different. I try to be versatile and not just stick to one look in shoots. It's fun changing the way you look to suit particular briefs. I like a challenge! It's important to be able and willing to do that. No one wants to see the same thing over and over again do they? I don't have different personas as such - I'm always just Hollie Bryant. I just like to mix things up a bit every now and again. This is definitely not all of me though – there's more where that came from!" ★



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HER NAME ON YOU

**A LESSON
LEARNT THE
HARD WAY**

When I was eighteen, I got my first tattoo. This rite of passage took place when I was in the army and the 'tattooist' was none other than the cook on our base. Now, when I say cook, I am using this term in the loosest possible way...

I don't think he actually cooked anything; he was more of a dogsbody around the kitchen, doing all the shit jobs no one else wanted to do! Jack had started army life on a two-year stretch but he kept getting it extended due to his uncooperative and unacceptable behaviour. He was what the officers called a NAAFI – No Ambition And Fuck All Interest.

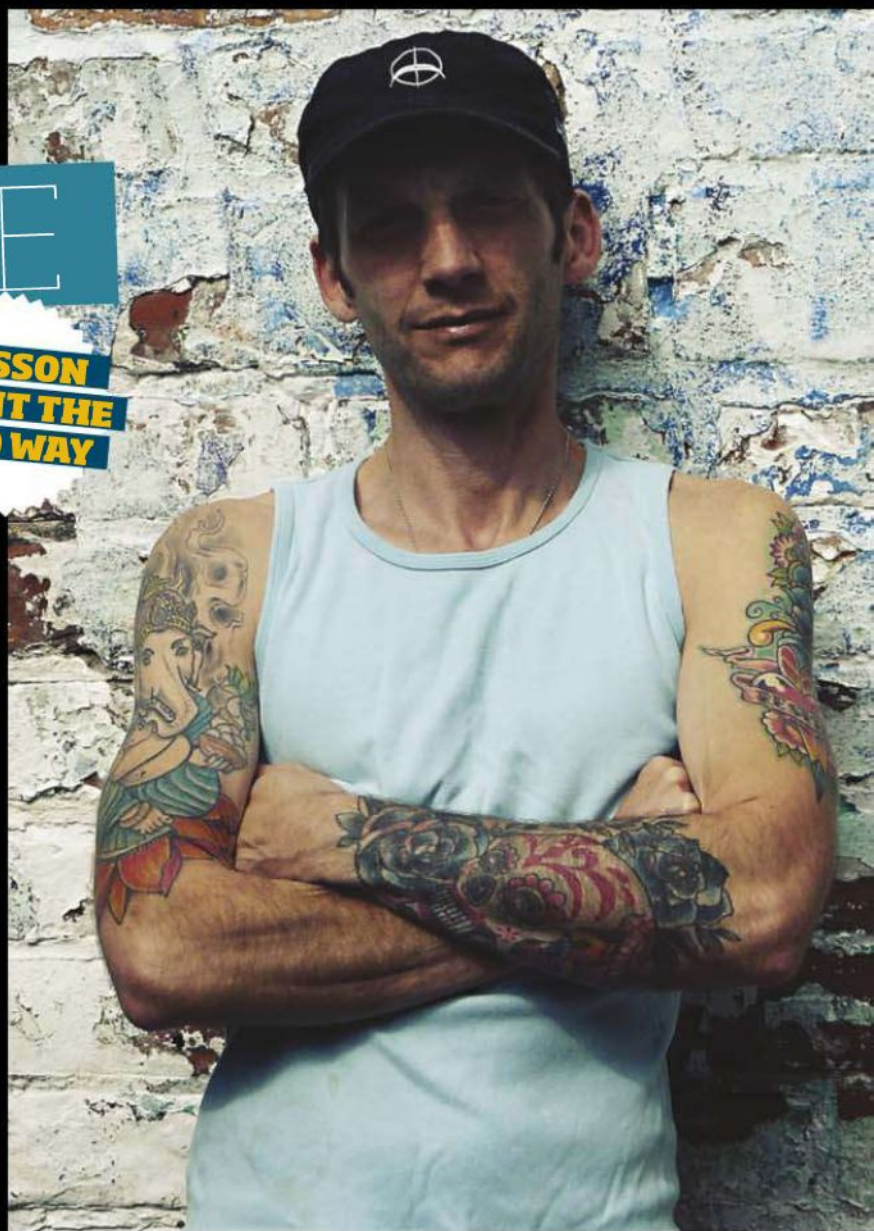
The truth was, Jack was a stark raving lunatic, but to us roofies (newbies) he was a lifeline. During basic training, when any form of alcohol was banned, Jack could always be counted on to have some for sale. But the most important business Jack ran was his tattoo studio.

Of course, being in a camp in the middle of the bush and taking part in a banned activity, his 'studio' was actually a toilet cubicle off the main mess. Opening hours were normally late at night when all the officers had gone off to the main base to get drunk and moan about the squaddies. And Jack's 'tattoo machine', well, that was a work of art! His equipment

of choice was quite ingenious but highly suspect. He had a mad contraption made up of a remote control car motor, a wire, a pin and one of those disposable pens. Of course this never worked properly, or at all, so he would just dip the pin in the ink and scratch you with it until his masterpiece was done.

I got the initials of my girlfriend tattooed on my upper arm. Nothing fancy, Jack only had blue

ink for one thing. He couldn't draw too well either, not that this stopped him from tattooing us, or deterred us from



I also learnt that fear and wanting to fit in, is a shit reason to get a tattoo.

getting tattooed. I guess you just had to be selective when choosing your piece. 'Keep it small and not too detailed,' comes to mind.

I remember there being a lot of pain, a lot of blood and a lot of swearing. Much more than was necessary for two letters! I also remember a lingering infection for the next few weeks.

Of course, being eighteen, we thought this was the coolest thing since finding our father's stash of porn mags. We were in the army and we were getting tattooed – we were hard men. The truth of it was that we were just youngsters, fresh out of school, trying to survive in an environment we had been fearing since we first heard our older friends talking about getting sent away to do their army service. We just wanted to fit in, show we were handling the situation. But it was all, literally, skin deep.

It wasn't long before I got the scratch tattoo covered up. I succumbed to the 'her name on you' curse and she broke up with me soon after I had got it done.

Just another life lesson stored away for the future. Fortunately, or luckily, enough I hadn't gone for a big piece like some of my comrades-in-arms had.

I don't know what happened to Jack, he was still running around the kitchen wheeling and dealing when I was transferred to another camp. I don't know what happened to the ex-girlfriend either, but I do know that I won't let just anyone scratch any shit on me anymore.

I learnt very quickly that, just like everything else in life, having the equipment and know how doesn't necessarily make you an expert on a subject. I also learnt that fear and wanting to fit in, is a shit reason to get a tattoo.

Lastly, I learnt that there is no such thing as the 'her name on you' curse. The trick is to make sure you are both really in love and are going to be together forever before getting his or her name tattooed on your arm, or even braver, in inch high lettering across your neck. ★



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28, single male, 5'8", muscular build, blue eyes, shaved head, two piercings, very lovable. Seeking female 18-30 for pen pal or more. Write to: Peter Watry 420047, RCI, Kenosha West, P.O. box 900, Sturtevant, WI 53177, USA. (190)

Sam, male, 20, B'ham, serving time, out 2011. Seeking pen pals, don't need same interests. I'm a graffiti artist, artist, rapper, singer/song/poem writer and producer. Have got 37 tats done myself, GSOH, friendly, not bothered about clothes/music tastes. For more info write to: Samuel Rogers A0619AJ, HMP Brinsford, New Road, Featherstone, Wolverhampton, WV10 7PY. (190)

Aging naughty creature with over half my body covered in ink, and still going. Loves horses, nature's beauty, fifties rock, amazing bridges, laughing in bed. Looking for lovely big wench for friendship and passionate times. E-mail: phildrake@hotmail.co.uk (190)

Males, 30s, tattooed and pierced. Looking for sexy, tattooed and pierced ladies for friendship and fun. Please text me on 07745907911. (190)

Horny Midlands punk, mid 40s, seeks sexy fun with like minded females. Contact Rob on 07775106741. (190)

Male, single, intelligent, caring, Nottingham, into art, music, writing. Seeks female for relationship. Text 07935321966. (190)

Handyman, 48, with the power tool! Passionate, friendly, seeks naughty, raunchy, busty female, 20-50 for no strings fun meetings! Norfolk, UK. Text 07507312538 (190)

Heavily tattooed 34 year old bloke looking for someone to write to. Been in the shovel for a while and will be for a while longer. Don't judge me yet. Write to: Kristen Geraghty A7834AH, HMP Ford, Arundel, West Sussex, BN18 0BX. (190)

Hi, I'm 30, separated, no kids and I live in Australia. I love to travel and cook and am into tattoos, hot rods and animals. I'd love a pen pal, any age or sex. Tammy Morris, 2 Merriwa St, Booragul, NSW, 2284 Australia. (190)

Sensitive, 28 year old, male goth from Banbury/Leamington Spa area. I am loyal, romantic, honest and caring. Also extremely open minded. I'm looking for a woman (only) between the ages of 25-45 for loyal long-term relationship. I am into goth, metal, 80s, electronica, bats, horror films, the paranormal, supernatural, occult, wolves, long cuddles in candle lit rooms. Women with disabilities, children and transgender most welcome. Please text me and make my lonely heart complete. NO liars or unfaithful women please. Text me on 07908969249. Annette Olson look-a-likes more than welcome. (190)

Lonely male, 28 huge Nightwish and Pendulum fan. Looking for loyal, caring, open-minded & loving females. 25 to 45 for full-term relationship. Race, size, disabilities and children aren't important as I have depth and can love

& respect all. If you're interested then text me on 07908969249 (Leamington Spa area) (189)

Single male biker, 27. VGSOH, honest, loyal, genuine and a bit crazy at times, looking for friendship with anyone alternative, possible LTR with right lady 07511718756 (189)

Hi, My name is Jason Hawkins. I am a single male, 27 years old. I have quite a few tattoos and a few piercings. I like Korn, Morbid Angel etc. I am a Satanist and moral vampire, looking for female pen pals to write to and maybe something more later with some interest. I like partying, movies, concerts, tattoos and piercings and like to have fun. Write to me at: 1297282 Jason Hawkins. 3899 State Hay 99, new Boston. TX 7550 (189)

Are there any nice women left? Thirty-eight year-old rock dude with short hair, good sense of humour, medium tattooed looking for friendship/excitement & romance. Herts or surrounding area. Tel: 07932677396 (189)

Brown, short haired guy, 39, into, Goth, gothic metal, alternative, 80's music, tattoos, gigs outdoors & films seeks genuine and single female 28-40 for friendship, fun and LTR Phone or text 07532498194 Lanc/Manc/York area. (189)

Hey! My Name is Adam Smith and I am looking for two women. One called Jess the other is Rachael. If either (or both) could get in touch again, that would be great. I live in Fenny Compton and have a stammer. Please text me on: 07908969249 (189)

33 year old male, brown hair, eyes, 5'8", smoker, tattooed inmate, looking for any wild and fun loving female pen pals of the same age. I'm out soon so come on girls! Russell Francks A6646AT HMP Springhill, Grendon Underwood, Aylesbury, Bucks. HP18 0TL (189)

Hello, my name is Jimmy. I am looking for a female pen pal to helps me pass the time away. I am a prisoner in the state of Alabama, USA. I have a life sentence. I am s/w/m, Age 43, 5'9" muscular built, 165 pounds. I am a Leo. I am looking for a single female pen pal. Age is not important. My interests include, Harley motorcycles, writing letters, reading, tattoos, horses, fast cars and body piercing. Please write to me at: Jimmy Aubrey Hardin 142503, 100 Warrior Lane 4-46, Bessemer, AL, USA 35023 Thanks! (189)

36yr old inked female G.S.O.H looking for a male for serious relationship/friendship, interests are tattoo conventions, getting inked, going to gigs/concerts average build (curvy) would like to meet someone with same interests. 07896294348 (189)

Hi, I'm Danny a gay guy living on the Linc's coast, young 55 heavily tattooed

arms(sleeved), slim body looking for similar guy 20/40 for friendship to a genuine relationship. Text 07535358018 or e-mail tattdan@live.co.uk (189)

My name is Kath from the Co Durham area. I'm in need of some TLC. I'm fun loving, tattoos (work in progress!) Love to dance. Into horrors, comedies and a spiritualist. Who knows, you could be the lucky one I've been looking for! Text: 0779620087 (189)

Hi, I'm Dakari and I am male, age 33, waiting to make your acquaintance. I'm 6'1" tall, weighing 200lbs; just the right man to lift you off your feet. I enjoy reading, writing, poetry, dancing, singing and computer work. Unfortunately, I am incarcerated in an Alabama state prison, USA with a life sentence without parole and I need someone to help me pass the time away. I'm looking for you if you are single/divorced and want to correspond with a good man, females only, age not important as long as you are genuine. Write to: Dakari Ai Parker Snr 205051, Y-3B 100 Warrior Lane. Bessemer, AL 35023, USA (189)

Hi ladies, I'm looking for pen pals & more. I'm 26 years old, inot all kinds of tunes, loves bikes and cars. Into the gym and other sports, currently in hospital. Great s.o.h, love assertive ladies, good looking, 5'10", age, looks unimportant. It's what's inside that counts! Get in touch, write me at Rampton hospital, Retford. Notts. DN22 OPD Shaun Prenderville 1750 (189)

JOBS WANTED

Looking for an apprenticeship in the Northeast area. I'm a 34 year old male with a mind set on wanting to become a tattooist. No drug or drink problems. Working on my portfolio - have a background in graffiti. A grades at school, graphic design diplomas at college, artistic skills back for good now. I would love the opportunity to finally achieve my passion to become a tattooist, which I should have done a long time ago. If any tattooist is interested in giving me a chance, please contact Kai on: 07989116689, sharon81@fsmail.net. (190)

Hi, I'm Danny seeking an apprenticeship in Derbyshire or the surrounding area's. I have always been very interested in the art of tattooing. I'm a hard worker and take pride in a job well done I am reliable honest and a enthusiastic practical confident out going person and willing to work Full Time, Part Time, Evenings and weekend's. I work well in a team or on my own thanks for your time please contact me if there's anything available on 07896766092 or email Skittles_Taste_The_Rainbow@live.co.uk (190)

Want a hand-poker in your studio? Experienced hand-poking tattooist looking for a permanent position in

busy, enthusiastic and good studio. The studio must be like me, friendly, creative and efficient (and drug free). I want to work for myself, tattooing only by hand and paying commission on work done rather than chair rental. Lots of experience of customers in a number of studios. I expect to share all daily routines and chores. Talking about years, not short-term, in the night studio. Currently on the Cornish coast, but anywhere considered to be close to bigger towns and cities. I am 55 (not that that matters) but intend to tattoo for many more years. Would add variety and value to any studio. Have a chat to begin with on 07833 760622 with Martin. Thanks (189-92)

JOBS OFFERED

Ohh My God Tattoo (OMG Tattoo) is a fairly new studio opened in Wimbledon, London. It is currently owned by Levi Pinter who has 10 years experience in tattooing. We currently have a vacancy for a full time tattooist/artist for immediate start. Must have existing client base and be able to demonstrate artistic and tattoo abilities through an established portfolio. Please view our website www.ohhmygod.co.uk Please view Levi's portfolio prior to contacting him for an interview as this will help give you an idea of the standard required. Please contact Levi on 078 078 39242 or email to levipinter@yahoo.com (190)

13 INK TATTOO are looking for an extra tattoo artist for Liverpool city centre studio. Minimum of 3 years experience. Applicants will be required to do a bench test, provide a up to date portfolio. Immediate start available. Please Contact Steve Bowness on 0151 707 9629 or email shop@13inktattoo.com Check us out at www.myspace.com/13inktattoo (190)

Full time tattooist wanted for Selfridges Birmingham studio. Must work well within a team and work to a high standard. For more info call Dee on 01216006937 (190)

Full or part-time 2nd artist required for busy modern tattoo studio in Shropshire. Must have at least 3 years (shop) tattooing experience and portfolio of recent work. No apprentices needed. Family run fun shop. Call 07790047207 or Email rena.fincham@sky.com (189)

Ink lab tattoo studio in Goole, East Yorkshire is looking for a new full time tattoo artist with at least 3 years shop experience. References will be required. Must have high standards and a solid and varied portfolio. Must be clean, reliable and work well in a team. If you are interested please contact Rich on 01405 762566 or at www.inklabtattoos.co.uk No time wasters please. (189)

Birmingham ink tattoo studio is looking for a body modification apprentice, (piercing, branding, scarification, implants, etc), applicants must be 20+ years, hard work and dedication is essential. Apply in person only. **BIRMINGHAM INK TATTOO, 66 DALTON STREET, CITY CENTRE, BIRMINGHAM, B4 7LX (189)**

Large central Oxford Tattoo Studio has room for guest spots and full time trained tattoo artist. Impressive portfolio and references essential. No apprentices. Contact Mick on 07900 241765 or mickdurham@aol.com (189)

Tattooist required for busy high street studio in Potters Bar Hertfordshire. Michael Rose Visual Art has a permanent or part time position available. Must have a minimum 4 years studio experience and a strong portfolio. To arrange an interview please contact us at info@michaelrosevisualart.com you can find out more about us and the studio by visiting our website: www.michaelrosevisualart.com. Please don't apply if you are an apprentice unless you have lots of drawings/sketches to show us. (189)

Professional Tattoo Artist required to join busy studio in South Wales. Pretty Hot & Tattoo'd are looking for a clean, reliable tattoo artist who is skilled and experienced in different styles and has an extensive portfolio. Hours are negotiable. Studio Experience is essential, and a trial period will be necessary. No apprentices please. Please send cv/cover letter and sample portfolios to Pretty Hot & Tattoo'd Ltd, 42 Penybont Road, Pencoeed, BRIDGEND, CF35 5RA or e-mail phattattoostudio@hotmail.co.uk. (189)

Large central Oxford Tattoo Studio has room for guest spots and full time trained tattoo artist. Impressive portfolio and references essential. No apprentices. Contact Mick on 07900 241765 or mickdurham@aol.com (189)

Tattoo artists (2) with minimum of three years studio experience required to join the King Arthur's Tattoo team. The positions are for immediate start, initially for the summer but with a view to becoming permanent fixture for the right applicants. The successful applicants must be comfortable with all styles of tattooing and have excellent drawing skills as we are primarily custom studios, but still have to do flash work when required! Please only apply if you have the relevant experience, no wannabes, no scratchers, no alcoholic's or drug addicts and no apprentices. An up to date portfolio is essential when applying, this can be emailed to: kingarthurstattoo@googlemail.com or call: 01723 364710 ask for Stuart. (189)

FOR SALE

Busy Est Tattoo Business for sale in the Derbyshire area, due to relocation. Precinct location. Large 2 floor studio to house multiple artists and large waiting room. Further rooms above, suitable for extra studio or piercing room with separate large waiting room. Negotiable lease. Low rent at £375 per calendar month, property qualifies for small business rates relief. Enquiries by email only - lee1138@hotmail.co.uk (188)

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BACK PIECE

THE POWER OF THE
TATTOOED LADY

"I used to have to go to the circus to see the tattooed ladies... Now, they're everywhere."

Jimmy Carr



Welcome to the end of this issue. What better way to wrap up than by putting our new contributor and very own tattooed lady to work! Paula Hardy Kangelos tells what it's like to be 'almost famous'...

And so we are, well, almost everywhere, we are not on the cover of Vogue but we have been represented on the catwalk. There is even a tattooed lady currently appearing in America's version of Strictly Come Dancing although I don't know if there has been a tattooed woman in space yet, NASA don't hold (or won't share) that data.

We have come out of the circus and we have travelled a long way, although we still attract attention.

I am a proud contemporary tattooed lady; I have public skin tattoos, my hands and throat, tattoos that are showing all of the time. I am not alone, far from it, I have many heavily tattooed female friends and the increasing popularity of tattoos means that more and more people are tipping the scale from having a tattoo to being tattooed. Despite my pride, I am pleased that summer is drawing to a close and while I don't relish the dark evening and the cold temperatures, I am relieved to temporarily be a little less conspicuous in tights and a coat.

I like to dress in a feminine way, I wear vintage dresses and heels and inevitably this means that my tattoos are on show most of the time. Nonetheless, my appearance has not affected my professional life, I have a BA and an MA and I make art, curate exhibitions and write. I have no trouble being taken seriously as an academic. In my personal life, I am a mother and a member of the PTA. I am an ordinary working mum on a pushbike.

I know I'm noticeable and I'm well aware that as I have chosen to look this way I must accept responsibility and rather than complain about prejudice, I must strive to disprove negative stereotypes. Of course, people look, stare, shout and tut, so I've learned to wear metaphorical blinkers and I'm getting pretty good at blocking out the whispers and the nudges. Still, sometimes I am subjected to attention



that it is impossible to ignore. I could be on my bike, waiting at a red light, grocery shopping or in the park with my son:

"Look at the tattoos on that bird!"

"Nice tattoos love"

"Oh my god, look at the state of that"

And more recently, cycling home from work I heard the shout,

"It's Kat Von D, It's f***** Kat Von D!"

Clearly, I am not Kat Von D, but it's interesting to note that the man on the street now had a context in which to place me, transforming me from a what into a who, a definite improvement. Which brings me to wonder, what is daily life like for Kat Von D? Kat has to contend with all the same tattoo related stuff that I do, but then has celebrity on top. Which is noticed first? Of course, Kat is celebrity because of the tattoos she makes and wears, so perhaps it is impossible to separate her celebrity attention from her tattooed lady attention.

Perhaps a better example to look at would be a public face that was already well known before embarking on their tattoo journey. Glamour model, Jodie Marsh came to public attention, not for her ink-adorned skin, but rather her bare flesh. Her transformation into tattooed lady came after her transformation into celebrity lady. As a woman famous for her looks, I imagine that Jody, like me, has often heard the "What's a pretty girl gone and done that to herself for?" line. She has probably also been accused of "Ruining herself" and told she will look even worse when she is old. Comments like this are daily occurrences for a contemporary tattoo gal.

Of course, not all of the comments and questions are negative. Some are full of admiration and envy, some arise from genuine curiosity and many will

ask for my opinion and recommended tattoo artists. I'm always happy to help with these, although I do have some standard answers for the most common questions:

"Does it hurt?" – Yes, yes it does.

"How many tattoos do you have?" – I don't know, but I'm aiming for one big one.

To the, "Your tattoos are beautiful" comment, I just say thank you, but my ten year old son says "She gets this all the time, you know". And it's true, I do get positive comments everyday.

Of course, comments, good or bad are of little consequence to the choice I have made. It is not about the approval or disapproval of others, it's about feeling good in your own skin, owning amazing, one of a kind artworks and being in control of your own destinies. It is art that is ours and ours alone. Circus legend, Betty Broadbent, sums it up perfectly:

"When I went to the boardwalk on my days off, I saw a tattooed man, Jack Redcloud. He was the man who had Christ's head and crown of thorns on the top of his baldhead. That's when I decided to get tattooed. I wanted to be independent and take care of myself. I sure didn't want to go back to school."

As tattooed ladies, we are seen as spirited, individual and independent, compelling and attractive, no wonder everyone wants to talk to us, ask us questions and shout at us in the street. Takes a special person to match a tattooed lady. I tried dating non-tattooed or "blank" folk and while it has never been an issue for me, it seems to be for them. I had a couple of dates with an actor and when he announced that "Had come to terms with it", making my tattoos sound like a terminal illness, I gave up.

I am now engaged to a tattooer, it can be easier to be with our own kind, my fiancé has more tattoos than I do, but when we walk down the street, all eyes are on me, such is the power of the tattooed lady. ★

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